

Chase Young Quietly Spent Sophomore Season Playing Through Pain En Route To 9 1/2 Sacks



Following in the footsteps of junior defensive end Nick Bosa and under the tutelage of defensive line coach Larry Johnson, Chase Young aimed high as he entered his sophomore year.

With momentum from his Ohio State debut in 2017 — when he registered 19 tackles (six for loss), 3 1/2 sacks and a forced fumble in 12 games as a freshman — Young’s potential beamed.

Between the summer of 2017 and spring of 2018, he packed on 15 pounds of muscle for his 6-5 frame, jumping from 250 to 265 ahead of the 2018 season and earning a co-starting role beside junior defensive end Jonathon Cooper.

But when the Buckeyes lost Bosa to season-ending surgery after he went down with his core-muscle injury in the third quarter of their 40-28 win over TCU on Sept. 15, they needed Young more than ever.

Over the course of the campaign, Young answered the call. He compiled 32 tackles (14 1/2 for loss), 9 1/2 sacks, nine quarterback hurries, five pass breakups and two forced fumbles in 13 games.

Perhaps most impressive, Young did so through an injury that had nagged him since the regular season started. Even in his career-best performance during OSU’s 27-26 comeback victory at Penn State on Sept. 29 — when he willed the defense with six tackles (three for loss), two sacks and two pass breakups — Young played through the pain.

“A lot of people don’t know that I rolled both my ankles during the season,” Young said. “Even in the Penn State game, both my ankles were rolled. Minnesota (Oct. 13), Purdue (Oct. 20), I was playing with two rolled ankles. It affected me with bending the edge. I didn’t have a lot of flexibility in my ankles at that time. Later in the season, I was staying in the treatment room. That (Nov. 17) Maryland game was the first game back I could bend the edge a lot more and felt I could trust my ankles.”



When exactly did he suffer his injury? Young said he rolled his ankles initially on Sept. 1 in Ohio State’s 77-31 rout of Oregon State, on the first of Bosa’s two sacks — late in the second quarter.

“In the first game of the season, (the left ankle) was the play when it was Nick’s first sack,” Young said.

“The quarterback was running and my arm was out and I tried to lean back and get it. When I leaned back, it popped. If you look after that play, I kind of hopped and was limping. The (right ankle) was the TCU game, I messed it up.”



Citing his competitive nature, Young said he never considered sitting out. Young pegged his health at 80 percent throughout the majority of the fall, fighting through a five-game stretch from Oct. 6 against Indiana to Nov. 10 at Michigan State in which he had just half a sack.

“After the Penn State game, I think everybody expected something crazy every game,” Young said. “That’s what I tried to do. I tried to put it on the line every game. But offenses prepare for defense and it’s not going to go like that every game. (Johnson) said to me, ‘Early success, everybody wants greatness game after game.’ When I didn’t play the games I wanted to play, I would get down on myself, like every player who wants to be great does. (Johnson) told me that happens to everybody and I just tried to finish strong.”

Down the stretch, Young’s body recovered. In his homecoming of sorts on Nov. 17 at Maryland, the Buckeyes’ 52-51 overtime triumph, the former five-star prospect in the 2017 recruiting class from Hyattsville (Md.) DeMatha Catholic came up clutch with two sacks and four tackles as he guided the defense to its late-game stands.

“The Maryland game — the way I was getting off the ball, I could play more freely,” Young said. “The Purdue and Minnesota games, I just didn’t feel comfortable and didn’t trust it. Later in the season, it got better.”



Young finished his season strong as he exploded in the Big Ten Championship Game, OSU’s 45-24 win over Northwestern on Dec. 1, with three sacks. Cementing his status as one of the 2020 NFL draft’s top prospects, Young is aware of where he stands but keeps focused on day-to-day progress under Johnson.

“I ain’t even worried about (the NFL draft),” Young said. “I’ve got a whole year. My job is not even to focus on it and stay locked in with Coach J. I’ve got to get stronger, faster. My play recognition has to get better. I’m just trying to stay focused on getting better.”

With junior defensive tackle Dre’Mont Jones among two players already declared for the 2019 NFL draft, Ohio State’s defensive line next fall figures to build around Young and other promising pieces set to return, from Cooper to an abundance of freshmen. So the future is bright, but as the No. 6 Buckeyes (12-1) approach the Rose Bowl on Jan. 1 against No. 9 Washington (10-3), unfinished business remains for Young and OSU in head coach Urban Meyer’s finale before retiring on Jan. 2.

“We’re going to go out and win for Coach Meyer,” Young said. “That’s the big dog. He’s the O.G. of the program. He’s, in my opinion, the best coach that came through here. ... If you want to get your mentality from anybody, he’s a winner. And he definitely taught me a lot of things coming through here.”

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