

Smith-Njigba Says Ohio State “Can’t Take Anything For Granted” After Last Season



The motivations are clear for Ohio State entering any given season. Defeat Michigan in the final game of the regular season, win the Big Ten Championship, and ultimately compete for a national championship.

The Buckeyes came nowhere near those goals last season, falling to Oregon in the second week of the season and later losing to the Wolverines in the Big House, and it left a mark on a season that ended on an otherwise positive note with a win in the Rose Bowl.

As Ohio State prepares for the season opener against Notre Dame on Saturday, the pains and lessons from last season are still felt throughout this year’s team.

“Taking those losses last year and a lot of people coming back and remember that feeling, it’s a terrible feeling,” Ohio State wide receiver Jaxon Smith-Njigba said on Wednesday. “A feeling that we don’t want to happen. Having that in our head all offseason, it pushed us and motivated us and we can’t let that happen again.”

While Smith-Njigba was not necessarily the issue for Ohio State last season – he broke the single-season record for receptions (95) and receiving yards (1,606) – he still took the result of last season to heart, and said he’s been working this offseason on becoming more focused.

“There’s a lot of things that’s been thrown around and stuff, just – (for) me to just focus on the goal, the main goal, and taking it day by day, just having an approach this year, I feel like has definitely helped me a lot,” he said. “Just trusting my brothers, just knowing they have my back, being able to talk to them, being more open this year.”

Similar to last season’s matchup with Oregon, the Buckeyes’ contest with Notre Dame provides an early opportunity to set the tone for the season. Smith-Njigba said Ohio State took things for granted last season, but this time around, everyone is taking steps to ensure it doesn’t happen again.

“You just can’t take anything for granted,” he said. “I feel like that’s what we did last year. (We) just thought we had a lot of talent around us and we were going to get the job done, but it takes more than

that. That was definitely a lesson that we had to learn and for this year, we're just building off that and knowing that talent is not going to get us (there).

"It's discipline on every play, just trying to win and come together and do the job. Having that loss was, kind of, in a way, good for us this season just to know it can happen."