Sophomore tight end Payne Durham had to grow up quickly last season to fill the veteran position as an underclassman.

The age spread of tight ends for the Boilermakers ranges between a freshman, three redshirts and one other sophomore who transferred from the defensive end position this season. With 250 snaps in the position under his belt, Durham has the experience necessary to be a leader among the tight ends.

Last year he played in the shadow of fifth-year star tight end Brycen Hopkins and studied the dynamics of Boilermakers’ offense. “Last year, I had a very specific role behind (Hopkins),” Durham said. “This year, it’s a little bit different. There’s guys counting on me, and coaches are counting on me.”

Durham says Hopkins served as an important role model for him, which he hopes to do this year for the rest of the young tight end squad. “Garrett (Miller) and Kyle (Bilodeau) come over to my house a whole lot of nights and just study the playbook with me,” Durham said. “(I) teach them things that were taught to me, kind of how to conduct themselves.”

Tight ends coach Ryan Wallace said he feels good about Durham being the number one tight end. “Payne has a very high ceiling,” he said. “He’s got a lot of work to do and he’s never had a bad day.”

Durham attributed Durham’s physicality and agility, both traits of tight ends, to his high school lacrosse career. He didn’t pick up football until his senior year, but tallied 24 receptions for 330 yards and five touchdowns by the end of the season.

He played in two games as part of the reserves his freshman year, but it wasn’t until last year that he was inducted into the Boilermakers’ arsenal. In a receiving core that was stacked with such big names as Hopkins and sophomores Rondale Moore and David Bell, Durham still found a way to make plays.

He saw the field in all 12 games and started in four. In last year’s game against Vanderbilt University, his first reception ended up being his first touchdown. He had eight more receptions for 82 yards and three more scores by the end of the season.

To maintain his power in the red zone, Durham said he wants to keep up what he did last year and find a way to always come away with the ball. “(I need to) get myself open and in tight spaces making sharp cuts,” Durham said. “(When) the ball’s up in the air, kind of having a basketball rebounding mentality, that that’s my ball, and I have to come down with it. There’s no other option.”

Durham added he wants to focus on third-down conversions and lengthening the 9.1 yards per reception he had last season.

Despite the ups and downs of the offseason, Durham said he was still disappointed when the news came in August that the 2020-21 season had been postponed. “I was so down in the dumps when it got canceled,” Durham said. “I think I had a really good offseason, so I was ready to show what I would have been working for.”

Durham was not the only person in the locker room who felt that way. When the news of the canceled season was released, Durham said morale was so low that the training facility was “probably one of the worst places to be in America.”

However, last month’s update announcing this year’s modified football season flipped the team’s bummed morale on its head. Durham spoke for Boilermakers on and off the field when he talked about returning to the field Saturday. “(The news) couldn’t come fast enough,” Durham said. “I’ve had the jitters all week. It’s a surreal feeling that we’re finally here, and I’m excited.”

Then-redshirt freshman Payne Durham catches a third down pass from quarterback Jack Plummer. Durham would score on this play to put Purdue in the lead during the Boilermakers’ 2019 game against Nebraska.

The Purdue offense celebrates with then-redshirt freshman tight end Payne Durham, who had just scored Purdue’s sole touchdown of the game on Saturday. Rain pouring down for most of the game, Purdue struggled and fell 24-6 to Illinois.
Offensive coordinator shifts to head slot to coach slot to lead Hawkeyes

BY MARYN HITCHETT
Staff Reporter

Purdue’s offensive line bedding around assistant coach Broke Brown to be the play the Boilermakers 2019 game against Maryland.

With head coach sidelined by virus, hope remains for strong opening

BY ALEX SARR
Staff Reporter

Purdue’s offensive line bedding around assistant coach Broke Brown to be the play the Boilermakers 2019 game against Maryland.

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Staff Reporter

To read the full story click on this link:

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Purdue doesn’t allow Exponent photographers into the game, it will make it hard to

The editorial board is made up of the editor-in-chief, managing editor, sports editor, assistant sports editor, campus sports editor, digital graphic editor, photo editor, content editor and design editor.
West Lafayette Mayor John Dennis said his advice to the governor was to make the decision to return to bars and restaurants, “and if you're going to do it, let's do it in a safe way.”

A lingering question around the Purdue administration, Dennis said, is “The Piano Man.” After the pandemic hit, the bar became the site of a vocal and robust discussion about how to bring back bar-related activities.

“A lot of this behavior that's been changed over the past several months, Dennis said. “You can see it in the bars and restaurants. People just kind of got into it.”

Dennis also emphasized the importance of an open-door policy. "It always is a challenge to make sure that we're doing the best we can possibly do,” he said. "The bar plans to be open this weekend."