

# Chris Holtmann Embraces Challenging Schedule



Ohio State head coach Chris Holtmann teaches his team to be fearless competitors on the floor, and it is evident in the way he constructs Ohio State's non-conference schedule.

"The schedule is close to being complete - not there yet, but it's close," Holtmann said. "We should know something on our ACC opponent in a day or so. And I had one of our staff guys say to me - we were talking about who to scrimmage - and he said, 'We may as well scrimmage the Warriors, given our schedule.'

"So he doesn't quite align with me in terms of scheduling and I appreciate that, that differing opinion. But we'll talk about the schedule in greater detail down the road, but it's a monster."

While coaches tend to be naturally competitive and driven to take on any challenges, not all programs necessarily give full autonomy to the head coach in terms of scheduling games. Holtmann joked that he'll only take credit for the schedule if it's deemed a good one.

"How much say do I have? 100 percent, pretty much," Holtmann said. "I don't know if that's the same in football or not. Basketball, it's usually the head coaches and their staff that are making those decisions on scheduling. So if it's a good schedule, then we'll take credit. If it's a bad schedule, the guy in the back, [director of basketball operations] David Egelhoff will be the one that deserves the credit for that."

Holtmann referenced Big Ten meetings with the conference's coaches, where some coaches debated the pros and cons of scheduling weak or strong non-conference opponents.

"You hear really a variety of opinions when you have 14 head coaches sitting and talking," Holtmann said. "And you hear a guy like [Purdue head coach] Matt Painter who's talking about, 'Don't schedule games versus these opponents.' And he's talking about opponents that it hurts you if you schedule certain games like this.

"And then other coaches are saying, 'I'm scheduling those games. We need wins.' And so I think it's interesting when you hear all that, you kind of look at the analytics behind it because that's what you're considering."

It's not surprising that Holtmann aligns with those coaches who would prefer to take on tougher non-conference opponents in preparation for the Big Ten slate and beyond.

In his postseason press conference April 10, Holtmann made it clear that he was not afraid to take risks or the added pressure that comes with lofty goals.

"I didn't get into coaching at the highest level of college basketball to be fearful of expectations," Holtmann said.

Diligent in his preparation and confident in his team, Holtmann does not fear any team in the country. The old adage is true. If you want to be the best, you have to beat the best.

The Scarlet and Gray will not shy away from anyone with Holtmann at the helm. Holtmann will seek out tough non-conference opponents to help prepare his team for a long season that comes with high expectations.

"If I'm going to err, and I think that remains in question here. Did I make a mistake in the schedule for this upcoming season?," Holtmann said. "It's going to be with providing a harder non-conference (schedule). I thought last year's was going to be a harder non-conference (schedule), it just so happened that we played some teams that maybe didn't quite have the years that we thought they would. But I would like a harder, more challenging non-conference (schedule), I would."

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