

Bruce Thornton Settling Into Point Guard Role For Ohio State



As Ohio State has had to rely heavily on its freshman class across the first few weeks of the season, no first-year player has carried more responsibility than guard Bruce Thornton.

Although freshman forward Brice Sensabaugh has led the Buckeyes in scoring through their first seven games, Thornton has been tasked with operating Ohio State's offense as OSU's floor general. While Thornton struggled to find his rhythm during Ohio State's first three games, posting 5.3 points per game while shooting just 38.5 percent from the field and 28.6 percent from beyond the arc.

However, as the Buckeyes trekked to Hawaii for the Maui Invitational and the competition became tougher, Thornton has shown stark improvements from his first three games. While in Maui, Thornton upped his scoring to 13.0 points per game — connecting on blistering splits of 56.5 percent from the field and 58.3 percent from three — while adding 2.3 assists and 1.7 steals per contest.

As Thornton grew into his own in Maui, he noted that his improved play was a result of gaining confidence as he settles into his role as the Buckeyes' primary ballhandler and facilitator.

"It was just confidence," Thornton said. "My first three games, I had to get used to the feel and get used to the team. But I feel like when the competition rises, that's when the pressure is on. I just feel like the challenge was right in front of me and I stepped up to it."

Thornton posted his first two double-digit scoring outputs of his career in back-to-back games, dropping 13 points against then-No. 17 San Diego State before scoring 17 points, while connecting on 4 of 6 three-point attempts, during Ohio State's 81-53 win over Cincinnati on Nov. 22. Thornton capped off his run in Maui with 9 points and four assists in the Buckeyes' 80-73 victory against then-No. 21 Texas Tech on Nov. 23.

Thornton remained in form against Duke on Nov. 30, hitting his first four shots while finishing the night

with 11 points and two assists. However, Thornton also registered four turnovers — the most in his young career with Ohio State.

Head coach Chris Holtmann noted that Thornton showed poise during Ohio State's three-game run in Maui and added that he's starting to see the game slow down for Thornton.

"It was really good to see, it was just good to see him play like we've seen him practice," Holtmann said. "I thought he relaxed and was able to get his feet in position to make shots. His shooting numbers have been good all offseason, and he had shown that a little bit in a few games but not to the level that he did (in Maui). I think that will continue to be the case as the game slows down for him.

"More than anything, the value of Bruce right now is in so many ways and I think that's what has given us the opportunity to play him as much as we're playing him," he continued. "He's an asset on the defensive end. He can, obviously, run our team.

"He is very much the definition of a really effective two-way player right now."