

Bullets: Holtmann Talks New Buckeye Roster



- Holtmann said that it's been a "unique" summer for Ohio State because of all of the moving parts with the roster, as E.J. Liddell and Duane Washington went through the draft process.
- Ohio State plans to redshirt freshman forward Kalen Etzler in 2021. Holtmann said he's not injured, just that Ohio State wants to give him an extra season of development.
- Holtmann said that Ohio State couldn't really begin focusing on team practice until later in the summer because of those draft prospects and players working with USA Basketball. "What we did was a lot of individual, one-on-one skill work."
- Holtmann said that Carmen's Crew head coach and former Buckeye big man Jared Sullinger is "tremendous" and that while he wants to continue playing professionally and that he needs to finish his degree, it's been "really fun" to watch him coach. "I think he has a very bright future... it's in his bloodline."
- E.J. Liddell will be "almost exclusively at the 4" in Ohio State's lineup. Holtmann mentioned sophomore Zed Key as someone that will play more minutes, and implied that he'll be seeing time at both frontcourt positions. Holtmann said that he thinks Liddell can still play to his strengths at the 4, even though he had some success against larger, slower defenders at the 5 in 2020.
- Holtmann said that the super seniors have created more depth across the board in college basketball, and that Ohio State doesn't yet have a great feel for how deep its rotation will be because of that.
- Meechie Johnson has "had a good summer. I'm excited about our young guards." Holtmann said that Ohio State will "certainly" use three-guard lineups at times this season.
- "Really excited about Malaki (Branham), really excited about his growth moving forward."
- Holtmann said that Branham has to get stronger, but that he's a "tremendous kid" and that he has great size and length. "He'll play more of either guard or wing spots here... I think he'll look like a freshman at times but then he'll look like a guy that has a tremendous future at times."
- Holtmann said Ohio State heard a lot from NBA teams about E.J. Liddell, and where he could improve.
- "The feedback we got from NBA teams, the two things they hit on the most were (perimeter shooting) and defensive versatility."
- Holtmann said that Cedric Russell is not a replacement for Washington, but that "he's got a real ability to make shots."
- Holtmann, stunningly, doesn't have strong thoughts on conference realignment. He said that Ohio State has been busy on the recruiting trail. "It's really not something I've given a lot of (thought to)."
- Holtmann was asked about bringing in a pair of experienced guards from the portal in Jamari

Wheeler and Russell. "We needed some veteran guys (at guard). Jamari has been really good. He has brought a competitiveness and a defensive approach that I think we need... He competes. He really competes on that end."

- Holtmann said that Ohio State doesn't want to overcorrect on defense to a down year in 2020, because it has generally been good "dating back to Butler."
- Holtman said that assistant Tony Skinn's previous relationship with Russell helped to make that transfer happen. He said that part of the appeal with Russell is that he isn't quite as ball-dominant as some other options were.
- Holtmann said that he's interested to see how the team will handle the loss to Oral Roberts once it is all back together again.
- He said that despite high expectations, he's trying to keep his team in the moment.
- "We will never have another roster like this. Ever... We were already going to be pretty old, and then you have a guy like Kyle Young (returning with the COVID rules.)"
- Holtmann said that legacy mattered to Liddell and Young in their decisions to return.
- He said that Young's legs "feel the best they've felt" in several years after having some time to recover from injuries. Ohio State plans to watch his minutes throughout the year, though, to make sure that he's okay through the end of the season.
- Holtmann said that NIL rights could be a factor in encouraging players on the edge to return to school, now that they can profit.
- Five-star defensive end J.T. Tuimoloau is "a ways away from stepping onto the court" and that suiting up for the basketball team will be a family decision. "I don't want to stand in the way of a national championship."
- Holtmann said that dual offers for football and basketball players are something Ohio State is open to if recruits have genuine interest in basketball and that the football and basketball staffs coordinate anything like that. Liddell, however, will not be allowed to play tight end, despite his size. "Yeah, that's not happening," Holtmann joked.
- Holtmann hinted at a commitment in the next couple of days for the 2022 class. "Keep your Twitter fingers ready."
- Jake Diebler is the new defensive coordinator, replacing Terry Johnson, who departed for Purdue after the season.