

Chris Holtmann Still Seeking Team Identity At Big Ten Media Days



With Ohio State's season-opener less than a month away, head coach Chris Holtmann is undergoing the task of putting the pieces together with such a new roster.

With four freshmen, three transfers and two walks-ons, Ohio State went through a near-complete roster transformation during the offseason. As several impact players left in the offseason — including E.J. Liddell, Malaki Branham and Kyle Young — Holtmann noted that his group is still building rapport with one another.

"We are well at work here in our program at finding our identity as a group, like so many teams in college basketball and like several teams in the Big Ten," Holtmann said at Big Ten Media Days. "We have a lot of new faces this year and I think that's exciting on one hand, it can also be challenging on the other hand. But, we really are excited about so many of the new faces as well as some of the returning faces within our program.

"We have four freshmen, who will all play an important role this year in terms of playing," he continued. "As well as the addition of some exciting transfers."

As the new-look Buckeyes continue to jell with one another, Holtmann pointed to his team's international trip to The Bahamas in early August as a time of learning for the team as well as the coaching staff. He noted that he gained insight into his team's physicality by playing against the likes of the Puerto Rican and Egyptian national teams.

"I think the Bahamas helped us learn some things about our group," Holtmann said. "There's a physical element, now, to how we're playing and how we're trying to play. And you get an idea of maybe who's ready for that.

"When I said you don't know what you don't know with a young and new team, I think when you get to

games, you really do find out some things that, maybe, you tried to anticipate in terms of areas you feel like maybe you're a little bit behind that you need to improve in, but you do get exposed in games unlike in practice."

With attention to getting his team ready to face the difficulties of a Big Ten schedule, Holtmann emphasized that the conference is still amongst the nation's best.

"I believe the Big Ten has been the deepest league in college basketball of the last three years and I honestly don't see that changing," Holtmann said. "(There are) tremendous coaches, tremendous players, great depth of talent, incredible fanbases and venues. It really is a premier league in college basketball and we're excited about this upcoming season."