

Former Ohio State Head Coach Chris Holtmann Reportedly “Blindsided” By Firing



Former Ohio State head coach Chris Holtmann reportedly received unexpected news about his job security on Wednesday, which came one day after the Buckeyes dropped their 16th-straight road game and ninth game in their last 11 attempts. A source close to the situation told *The Athletic* that the seventh-year head coach was “blindsided” by the school’s decision to fire him, and didn’t get a chance to meet with his team prior to the announcement.

According to an article in *The Athletic* written by Dana O’Neil and Tobias Bass, Holtmann reportedly met with athletic director Gene Smith last week, where Smith made it clear to the now-former Buckeyes head coach that while making the NCAA Tournament was critical, the school’s plan was to wait until the season ended to make a decision.

Instead, Holtmann was relieved of his duties on Wednesday with just six games left to play in the regular season — a move that will require Ohio State to pay him the remaining \$12.8 million of his contract — and associate head Jake Diebler was named head coach for the remainder of the 2023-24 campaign.

While it is unknown what day Smith met with Holtmann last week, the last week of play for Ohio State was an up-and-down one for the coach and his program. The Buckeyes, then-riding a four-game losing streak, had arguably their worst loss of the season on Feb. 6, squandering an 18-point second-half lead at home in a 76-73 loss to then-13-9 Indiana. Four days later — with Smith in attendance — Ohio State had one of their best victories, a dramatic 79-75 double-overtime home win against Maryland where sophomore guard Bruce Thornton provided the game-tying scores in regulation and overtime before providing the game-winning layup in the second extra period.

Ohio State could not replicate that late-game success on the road on Tuesday night, however, where the Buckeyes missed 3 of its final 14 shots and committed two turnovers down the stretch to fall 62-54 to No. 20 Wisconsin. It was a defeat that gave Holtmann and his team their 16th-straight road loss — a

streak that dates back to Jan. 1, 2023 — a major stain on Holtmann's coaching resume that may have played a large role in Smith's decision to fire him before the season ended.

Holtmann racked up a 136-86 record (.614 winning percentage) and four NCAA Tournament appearances in his time leading Ohio State, but finished his seven-year tenure with just a 30-30 overall record and 9-25 conference record across his final two seasons.