

Holtmann Recaps Ohio State's Trip To The Bahamas



As the Ohio State men's basketball team picked up a pair of wins over the Egyptian and Puerto Rican national teams during the Buckeyes' summer trip to the Bahamas, head coach Chris Holtmann outlined his team's accomplishments during the five days with the 2022-23 regular season on the horizon.

In an interview with Andy Katz of the Big Ten Network, Holtmann said the coaching staff learned a lot about the new-look team — which includes eight new Buckeyes on the roster — during the program's journey to the Bahamas.

"We have a brand new group, so the biggest thing was getting some questions answered, trying to figure some things out. We tried to play two teams that would resemble teams that you're going to play in the regular season. Organized, coached teams that have had actually played together, sometimes you don't get that when you play overseas," Holtmann said. "Obviously you enjoy spending time together, but they spend time together the whole summer so that wasn't necessarily the biggest priority, the bonding part — that's an element of it. We also really wanted to figure some things out in terms of how we would play."

The Buckeyes' five freshmen and three transfers received their first taste of action in an Ohio State uniform during the team's pair of exhibition games at the Atlantis Resort.

With attention to the team's transfers — Tanner Holden, Sean McNeil and Isaac Likekele — Holtmann said the trio fills several of the Buckeyes' needs after the losses of star players E.J. Liddell, Malaki Branham and Kyle Young.

"Sean will provide immediate shooting at one of the wing positions. Tanner is going to provide the ability to play downhill. He also shot it pretty well in the Bahamas," Holtmann said. "[Likekele] is a kid who you can play as many as three-to-four different positions, and we will move him around from point to wing to some small-ball options. We'll move him all over the floor."

While the transfers carry plenty of experience into the program's 124th campaign, Holtmann will also be forced to rely on his deep freshman class — which includes four four-star prospects.

As the freshman Buckeyes received their first in-game action in the Bahamas, Holtmann said the group will have the potential to leave their mark on the team this season.

"I think all four will have a real impact. Anytime you're a big kid, it takes a little bit longer. So, Felix [Okpara's] transition might be a little bit more significant. He's 6-11, 215-17 pounds, he's still figuring things out but he's going to play," Holtmann said. "Brice [Sensabaugh] can score the ball right away as a freshman. He has to continue to grow in other areas, but he's a really talented scorer.

"Roddy [Gayle Jr.] provides a great ability to play off the ball and Bruce [Thornton] is obviously ready to go at the point," he continued. "I really believe we'll have moments this year where they'll help us significantly."

Looking ahead to the regular season, Holtmann acknowledged the Buckeyes will need to quickly adjust to playing with each other due to the team's difficult non-conference slate — which includes contests against Duke and North Carolina as well as an appearance in the Maui Invitational.

"The schedulers put it on us here, with the return game with Duke then, obviously, playing Carolina," Holtmann said. "Maui is going to be phenomenal. Watch San Diego State, who we open with, they're terrific, they're going to be a top-15 program, I think.

"It's great that we get those kind of tests early," he continued. "The exciting thing when you have a bunch of new faces and when you have a young team, is you don't have a lot of time to figure things out. What you do in a sport that spans two semesters is have a chance to say, 'What can we become come January and February.'"