

Jake Diebler Officially Introduced As Ohio State Men's Basketball Coach



Ohio State on Monday formally introduced Jake Diebler as head coach of the men's basketball program following a successful 6-2 stretch as the team's interim leader.

Speaking on the floor of Value City Arena in front of a group of local media, family, friends and former Ohio State players, among others, Diebler — who was officially hired as head coach and given a five-year, \$12.5 million deal on Sunday — expressed gratitude towards incoming athletic director Ross Bjork and those involved in the hiring process for trusting him to lead a program that he grew up admiring and spent eight of his first 14 coaching seasons on staff.

"Growing up, you have dreams," Diebler said. "You never fully get to predict if or when those dreams will come true. So I just want to praise God for being able to live out a dream of mine. This is a dream. And it wouldn't be possible without my wife Jordan, my beautiful babies, James, Jessa and Jackson, my mom and dad, my brothers, best friends, cousins. Family is so important to us, it's been ingrained in me from the time that I could start walking.

"And part of our family is Ross Bjork. Part of our family is President Carter and Gene Smith. Thank you for choosing me to fill in and empowering me to be myself...I'm humbled to be in this position. I take so seriously the foundation that (former Ohio State players) have laid for this program that which we stand upon, and hopefully we will honor in the greatest way to help get this thing to the heights that it belongs."

Diebler placed a significant emphasis on cultivating and expanding upon the program's "family" as head coach during his press conference — something that he thinks can only be further ingrained in Ohio State's culture if everybody in the program commits to it.

"Family is a multi-dimensional thing," Diebler said. "What each member does affects the other. We've talked about how big that family is. We are all going to be committed. We're going to surround ourselves with people who are committed to moving in the same direction and caring and loving for everybody who is a part of that.

“Ohio State is a special place. It’s so special. This university, I’ve seen first-hand what it can do when those (involved) are connected.”

But aside from the program’s culture and family, Diebler also laid out his vision for how he wants to build his program from a basketball standpoint. The coach said that while his primary focus right now is to guide his team through the rest of the 2023-24 season in the NIT, where the Buckeyes are a No. 2 overall seed set to host Cornell in the first round on Tuesday, he will also need to build a program in the future that can regularly have success in all things roster construction. This includes recruiting both in-and-out-state prospects, bringing players in through the transfer portal and — perhaps most importantly — even preventing players from entering the portal themselves, the latter two of which were areas where Holtmann struggled to find success during the back-half of his tenure.

“I think balance is important at Ohio State,” Diebler said. “We’re able to recruit talented high school players, and we need to continue to do that. But we also need to utilize all the resources available to build the best roster possible. So that balance will be important. That’ll change, to some degree, year to year. But we’re going to continue to view through the lens of what best sets us up to achieve our goals.

“High school recruiting is really, really important in that. So is the transfer portal. And then roster retention is probably the greatest importance. We have to serve these guys well and see this season through. But there are great players in this program right now. And there are great players in this program who care a lot about Ohio State. They showed that. That was revealed by the way they played and finished the season.”

Regardless of his outlook on the future of the men’s basketball program, Diebler said he is looking forward to embracing the many challenges and expectations that come with becoming the stable face and leader of the Buckeyes’ program, a unique opportunity that he will not take for granted throughout his five-year tenure.

“What drives me is to serve this program as best as I possibly can,” Diebler said. “That’s not going to change. It’s not going to change once we are able to win a championship. That’s not going to change when we go through adversity. It’s not going to be different five years from now, or however much longer I’m able to serve. Time will change things, certainly, but the motivation behind how we’re going to take this program to where it belongs will not.”