

# Men's Basketball Year In Review: Colby Baumann/Owen Spencer



On a team that was expected to play to its depth, walk-ons Colby Baumann and Owen Spencer operated in deep bench roles for Ohio State in 2022-23.

As is life as a walk-on, Baumann and Spencer combined to appear in just 10 games during the season, but also were recognized for their ability to push the Buckeye rotational players in practice. As a result of his effort as a scout team player, Spencer was awarded a scholarship for the remainder of the season after Ohio State dispatched Iowa 93-77 on Jan. 21.

"(Owen) provides us a scout team center than can also play in a pinch if we need him," Ohio State head coach Chris Holtmann said. "Great attitude, great kid. We were really happy to do that for him."

Prior to joining the Buckeyes, Baumann suffered a devastating wrist injury during his senior season at IMG Academy, and with little recruiting buzz surrounding him, he decided to remain at IMG for a post-grad year. The extra year of high school ultimately aided Baumann in his journey to Ohio State.

"That was a great year for me, just to develop and get that extra year," Baumann said. "Coming out of that season, I got a text and a call from (Ohio State assistant coach Mike Netti), basically saying that they needed a guy. I went through that whole process with Ohio State, definitely setting my sights on Ohio State. When that became available, I immediately pulled the trigger."

Baumann also noted that his journey as a walk-on is leading him to grow as a basketball player, pointing to the level of competition he would compete against on a daily basis in practice as a motivating factor in his development.

"I've surprised myself with some of the stuff that I've done since I've been here," Baumann said. "If you play against better competition, you're going to be better yourself. I definitely think that being around these guys has helped me in every aspect."

Baumann appeared in just three games for the Buckeyes last season, totaling three rebounds and an assist in six minutes of play.

Spencer arrived at Ohio State with a similar mindset as Baumann after spending his first two collegiate seasons at The Citadel. After The Citadel relieved head coach Dugger Baucom of his duties at the conclusion of the 2021-22 season, Spencer entered the portal and ultimately landed with the Buckeyes as a walk-on.

Spencer appeared in Ohio State's first two games of the season and scored his first points as a Buckeye during OSU's 82-56 victory over Charleston Southern on Nov. 10, 2022. He also appeared in three games during December, in which he totaled one point across six minutes of action.

After Ohio State's 93-77 win over Iowa on Jan. 21, Holtmann presented Spencer with a letter, which he said came from a Buckeye fan. Instead, Holtmann crafted the letter, in which he granted Spencer a scholarship for the remainder of the season.

"It was a huge surprise," Spencer said after the game. "Obviously, I had no idea. I was just happy we won the game, everybody was hyped after that, it was a really good win. Then the coaches came in, and we usually clap it up and get in a huddle and talk about the game. And they had envelopes, one for (Isaac Likekele), and Roddy (Gayle Jr.) had one. I'm guessing the coaches wrote that in the coaches' locker room to set it up.

"They did a really good job because I had no idea what the whole thing was about," he continued. "It was a lot of exhilaration and happiness."

Another guiding factor toward the decision to grant Spencer a scholarship came from his ability to push Ohio State's other big men in practice, a role that Spencer embraced.

"That's a role that I'm very comfortable in," Spencer said. "I've always known that would be my role when stepping into this program. I know how important it is to be a great teammate, that's one of our core values in the locker room. That's something that I really try to embrace as a walk-on, but also knowing that if Zed goes down, if Felix (Okpara) goes down, if some situation arises, I could step on the court and play.

"It's my job to not only be a great teammate and embrace that walk-on role but also make sure I'm ready if I'm needed on the court."

Spencer appeared in a pair of games from that point.

With Key sidelined due to a shoulder injury and Okpara hampered by foul trouble against Purdue on Feb. 19, Spencer was thrust into a difficult situation and tasked with defending 7-4 center Zach Edey. It did not go well for Spencer, who picked up four fouls in six minutes of action while the Buckeyes plummeted to an 82-55 defeat at Mackey Arena. Spencer also played in the final minute of Ohio State's 68-58 upset win over Michigan State during the Big Ten Tournament on March 10.

As Spencer filled his role admirably during the season, he noted that his favorite moments during the campaign, outside of receiving his scholarship, came when he was around his teammates and just enjoying their presence.

“My favorite memories have just been with the team, whether it’s summer workouts, especially grinding on Fridays at 6 a.m. You grow a lot together through those experiences,” Spencer said.