

Ohio State Assistant Jack Owens Emphasizing Relationships, Player Development In New Role



Jack Owens has seen it all in his 22 years of coaching college basketball.

Prior to joining Chris Holtmann's staff at Ohio State, Owens rose from coaching at the junior college ranks and spent time as both an assistant and head coach at multiple Division I universities. Over the past five seasons, he served at the helm of the Miami (Ohio) men's basketball program, amassing an overall record of 70-83 and an appearance in the 2018 College Basketball Invitational.

Although Owens spent the last half-decade in Oxford, Ohio, he is no stranger to the Big Ten as he served as an assistant coach on Purdue's coaching staff from 2008-17. As he returns to an assistant coaching role with the Buckeyes, he said he is just trying to make the most out of his newfound opportunity in Columbus.

"When you're a head coach, every decision that comes across the program or your desk, you're making that final call," Owens said Wednesday. "Here, coach Holtmann, he's the guy and everyone is falling in line with whatever he decides to do. At the end of the day, that's what we're going to do. But as an assistant coach, I just want to come here and obviously serve to the best of my abilities as an assistant coach and help the program move forward."

Looking back on the interview process, Owens said the opportunity to coach with Holtmann was a draw for him, as well as the Ohio State brand.

"We do have a great staff here, everyone is on the same page," he said. "Obviously, you want to be around good people, it starts right there, and guys who do it the right way and coach Holtmann definitely does that."

Owens joins an Ohio State coaching staff that experienced a good deal of turnover since the end of last season. Lead assistant coach Ryan Pedon took his first head coaching job at Illinois State, while assistant coach Tony Skinn joined Kevin Willard's staff at Maryland after one season with the Buckeyes.

Ohio State did not only experience plenty of turnover in its coaching staff, but also saw 10 players from last season's roster depart the program for a variety of reasons. The Buckeyes patched holes in their roster through a top-10 recruiting class in 2022 — according to 247Sports — and a trio of veteran transfers in Tanner Holden (Wright State), Isaac Likekele (Oklahoma State) and Sean McNeil (West

Virginia).

While Owens joins a program with a roster largely composed of new players, he pointed to a similar transition period for both him and the new additions to the Buckeyes.

"It's a transition with the portal and everything else," he said. "I think we have a good balance of guys in regards to young guys, older guys and adding some experienced players as well. But at the same time, I am transitioning with these guys, so learning on the fly as we go along has been pretty good."

With Owens having only spent a little over a week with the Buckeyes, he emphasized his current focus was on development and building relationships with his new players. He pointed to consistency and allowing players to grow at their pace as important characteristics for coaches at this stage in the offseason.

In his short time with the program, Owens said his initial goals are building a rapport with his fellow coaches and players and taking advantage of the summer months to improve as a team.

"It starts with relationships. I think with our own team, you have to build relationships with your guys who were here, to build that trust because that's very important. Trust is not handed out at the front door, you have to build that and spend time with the guys," he said. "Obviously, we're working from a development standpoint with each individual but at the same time we're going to put the puzzle together as a team and hopefully get better."