

Ohio State Excited To Get NCAA Tournament Rolling Against Maine



Second-seeded Ohio State will take the floor on Friday against No. 15 Maine, set for a noon tip from Value City Arena to begin the first round of the NCAA Women's Basketball Tournament. But the contest has been a long time coming for the Buckeyes, who will have been without a game for 14 games by the time they take the floor again.

"Really excited to get back out there, and nice to have an opponent," head coach Kevin McGuff said on Sunday. "We lost day one in the Big Ten Tournament, so it feels like it's been forever since we've played a game. Now we have an opponent in Maine. I don't know a ton about them, but I know they're a program that's used to winning. They've had a great season if you look at their record. This time of year, though, you've got to play somebody good."

□ We're Dancing!

We take on #15 seed Maine in Round 1 of @MarchMadnessWBB !!
pic.twitter.com/b1ZdyD0Ab3

— Ohio State Women's Basketball (@OhioStateWBB) March 18, 2024

Maine earned an automatic bid after winning the America East Tournament – just the 10th bid in program history – and the Black Bears enter the NCAA Tournament with a 24-9 record, having won 17 of their past 19 contests dating back to Jan. 4. Graduate guard Anne Simons leads Maine with 18.8 points per game, while junior forward Adrianna Smith averages 16.6 points, 10.9 rebounds and 4.7 assists while shooting 43.0 percent from the field, and leads the Black Bears with 25 blocks.

And with Maine looking to upset Ohio State, the Buckeyes have been hard at work over the last week and change. Back-to-back losses to Iowa and Maryland entering the tournament eliminated Ohio State from contention from a top seed in the NCAA Tournament, but the team has been afforded the

opportunity to dial in during practice with no games to play over the past few days.

“For us, the tournament didn’t go how any of us wanted,” sophomore forward Cotie McMahon said after the Buckeyes’ seeding was announced. “We were capable of doing a lot more, and we’ve had a week to prep, now we have another week to prep and relay show proof to ourselves what we’re really capable of and what this team’s capable of. The sky’s the limit for us.”

McGuff is in agreement that the extra preparation is working in favor of Ohio State, and feels the team is in a good spot as it prepares to take the floor and begin searching for a second appearance in the Elite Eight in as many seasons.

“Our energy, effort, concentration, focus has all been really good,” he said. “I think we’re in a good place mentally and physically, so hopefully we can have a good week of preparation before we play Maine.”