

Ohio State Expecting To Play New Orleans Dec. 28



An Ohio State spokesman confirmed on Dec. 26 that as of that evening, the Ohio State men's basketball team was slated for a return to play on Dec. 28 against New Orleans, barring new positive COVID tests within the program.

The team returned to practice on Sunday and, if able, would be playing its first competitive basketball in more than two weeks after positives within the program shutdown a scheduled trip to play Kentucky in Las Vegas on Dec. 18 and then put an end to a matchup against UT Martin a few days later.

On the former matchup, the Buckeyes tried their best both to field a competitive group and then to reschedule, but neither came to fruition.

"That was a difficult conversation to have with our players," head coach Chris Holtmann said on 97.1 The Fan. "They really wanted to play in the game. It's a rarity when you get a chance to play Duke and Kentucky. Obviously, we were able to beat Duke here. I think even as good as Kentucky played on Saturday, I think we would've had a great shot at full strength to play well there. We were really fighting for that opportunity.

"And honestly, we were going to do it relatively shorthanded. We were headed there with somewhat of a thin bench and some important, key players that were not going to be able to play in the game. But we wanted to go anyway because we felt like we owed it to CBS Sports and we felt like we owed it to Kentucky."

Now, the question becomes one of comfort and rust for the Buckeyes. New Orleans is 3-7 entering the game and won't likely present a serious challenge if the Buckeyes are near full strength, but getting there is a worry for Holtmann.

"I think with rust, you fear that the timing becomes an issue," Holtmann said. "There's no question it's a concern, that's why we fully intend to play the game on the 28th and expect to play the game on the 28th because we need to get some game work.

The Privateers have had two straight games canceled as well, and haven't competed since an 82-50 loss to Utah State on Dec. 11 - the same day Ohio State toppled Wisconsin before entering a pause of its

own.