

Ohio State Head Coach Chris Holtmann Criticizes Team's Lack Of Toughness After Nebraska Loss



Throughout the 2023-24 season, Holtmann has remained steadfast in his support of his team, even saying after Ohio State's home loss to Wisconsin on Jan. 12 that he has a "high-level belief" that his squad will emerge from a tough early January stretch.

That unwavering confidence seemed to waver in the minutes after the Buckeyes' disappointing 83-69 road loss to Nebraska on Tuesday — the team's fourth defeat in six games in January and 13th-straight on the road — where his team squandered a nine-point first half lead and were outscored 70-37 in the final 31:36 of game action.

In the minutes following Ohio State's double-digit defeat to the Cornhuskers, Holtmann expressed his dissatisfaction in his team's performance to 97.1 The Fan's Paul Keels and Ron Stokes, specifically pointing to the team's overall lack of toughness and inability to rebound as two key qualms for the head coach.

"We weren't physical or tough enough," Holtmann said. "That is ultimately on me. We were too soft at times with the ball, soft with our cuts and soft defensively. We have to be better in that area. That was clear. I think you saw it on the glass, for sure."

Holtmann listed his team's lack of rebounding effort as one area of the Nebraska game that he was particularly displeased with. Ohio State tied its season-lows in both offensive rebounds (six) and total rebounds (28), two areas of which the coach has established as a major emphasis for his team all season. Holtmann said these efforts, which allowed the Buckeyes to be outrebounded 35-28 by the Cornhuskers — who entered the contest ranked 118th in the nation in rebounding margin at +2.8 — were simply inexcusable.

"For us to only have six offensive rebounds, that is a joke for us right now," Holtmann said. "We are a better rebounding team than that. Across the board, we have to be better. We are not playing with the kind of force we need to, and that falls on me."

Despite the major change in tune towards his impressions of his team, Holtmann said these shortcomings ultimately fall on the head coach himself, who has received a considerable share of criticism from fans and those who closely follow the program for his recent January struggles. Since the 2022-23 season, Holtmann and Ohio State have recorded just five wins in 15 tries in the first month of the calendar year, with three of those defeats coming by double-digits.

"Across the board, we just weren't nearly tough enough," Holtmann said. "Ultimately, that's my fault. I take responsibility for that. We just weren't as physical and as tough as we needed to be. And give (Nebraska) credit, they took advantage. Good team."