

Ohio State Head Coach Chris Holtmann Previews Game Against Indiana



Ohio State head basketball coach Chris Holtmann met with the media on Friday afternoon to discuss Saturday's game against Indiana (12 p.m. on ESPN).

Here's a brief recap of what he had to say:

- Holtmann said Indiana is an experienced team and that it will be a great challenge for the Buckeyes. "They're tough, they're physical, they're well-coached. Our guys need to be ready."
- Holtmann said that defensive commitment needs to be a staple of the team. "The biggest thing you're trying to gauge is competitive spirit and commitment at that end." Doesn't think they're going to be elite on defense, but that they can always continue to improve.
- Holtmann said Indiana forward Trayce Jackson-Davis struggled last year against the Buckeyes because of his youth, as well as former forward Kaleb Wesson's length and size. But he's matured in the year since and expects him to impact the game in a number of ways. "Every area of his game has improved."
- Holtmann noted how it seems like every game in the Big Ten is tight and he expects the game against the Hoosiers to be the same way. "We expect it to go down to the last couple of minutes."
- Holtmann on former Ohio State and current Houston Rockets forward Jae'Sean Tate. "He's been phenomenal to watch. It's not a surprise to those of us who know him. He really fits today's NBA."
- Holtmann said this game is bigger than Jackson-Davis vs Ohio State forward E.J. Liddell. "They have gifted teams around them."
- Holtmann said he is not aware of how the Big Ten will handle postponed conference games. "If it's something here in the next week or two that relates to us, we may address it then."
- Holtmann on freshman guard Meechie Johnson: "He's a great kid and he wants to learn." He has taken the stance of learning so that he can help the team in the future. "I give him a lot of credit for his growth and maturity as a person."
- Holtmann said he feels like the team has bought in more this season than they maybe did in the past. Felt they were playing really well before things got cancelled last year, too. "Up to this point, our guys have been exceptional with that."
- Holtmann on guard C.J. Walker's return from injury. "It's a credit to him that he's been able to come back to a group that was winning games and helped us to perform at a really high level." He acknowledged Walker is still injured, though. "His hand still bothers him." Plan is for him to ease back into things before transitioning into a starting role again. "I'm sure he'll star on Senior Day."

- Holtmann said Zed Key has fared well against the big men he's faced this season. "He'll have his hands full tomorrow He's still come back from a little bit of an ankle sprain from the other day (but) we don't have a number of these wins without him."
- Holtmann said forward Justice Suing didn't have a great game against Maryland, which is why he played only 17 minutes and didn't score. "It wasn't anything specific," they just went with other combinations that were working that evening. "I could have probably played him more."

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