

Ohio State Head Coach Jake Diebler Shares Recruiting Strategy



Ohio State head coach Jake Diebler has continuously stressed the importance of recruiting — especially recruiting within Ohio — since taking over the reins as head coach last spring, and during Ohio State’s media day on Tuesday he revealed some of the strategies he and his staff have implemented to try and get top-level high school players to play for the Buckeyes.

When asked to share what he has tried to impart on the high school prospects who have taken visits to Ohio State this fall, the 37-year-old coach said he places great importance on giving them an up-close look at how he and his team operate in practice, which he thinks can provide them with a better feel for the program’s still-fresh culture and identity before they depart campus.

“Recruiting is obviously a really, really important — arguably the most important part of the program,” Diebler said. “What we’ve discovered — we’ve tried to get guys on campus to see us practice. I think seeing us practice is a tangible example of how we want to play. We’re not a finished product by any means right now, but (we want them to) see how we want to play, see the way I coach, because there isn’t a lot of data out there for them to see.

“And we’ve gotten great feedback, whether it’s from recruits, coaches, guests who have seen us practice, and I think that’s an important part for us.

As Diebler alluded to, this strategy has appeared to pay off for Diebler so far this fall. Two of Ohio State’s most highly touted visitors this fall — Napa (Calif.) Prolific Prep five-star 2025 teammates forward Niko Bundalo (6-10, 215, power forward) and Darryn Peterson (6-5, 195, combo guard) — both indicated that they enjoyed taking in a Diebler-led practice during their respective visits.

Bundalo, the nation’s 26th-best player and seventh-best power forward, called watching Ohio State’s practice the highlight of his trip, while Peterson, the No. 3-ranked player in the nation and top-ranked combo guard, said that he learned during his visit that Ohio State’s style of play is synonymous with the

way he wants to play.

“That’s what I take the most from: style of play and understanding the game, because ultimately I’m committing somewhere to play basketball and to have a place that feels like home,” Bundalo told the Columbus Dispatch after his Sept. 21 visit.

“I got to watch practice and see some of their plays. Just from what I’ve seen, they did a lot of DHO’s (dribble-hand-offs) and ball screens, and that’s my bread and butter,” Peterson told On3 Sports after his Aug. 31 trip to Columbus.

While having recruits watch practice seems to be a sound strategy for Diebler and his staff, the Buckeyes’ head coach said he ultimately wants to leave those who visit campus with a strong parting message about the culture and uniqueness of Ohio State both as a program and university, one which he thinks can leave a lasting impact on student-athletes that persists long after they don the Scarlet and Gray.

“For me, it’s very easy for me to talk about Ohio State,” he said. “I think that’s something that people realize (when talking to me), just how much I care about this place, how much I believe in this place and believe in the impact it can have for the young men on our team, certainly while they’re here but long after that. I genuinely believe that.

“So when I get an opportunity to talk about that, I try to seize that moment, and will continue to do so. Because this place is special. It’s elite in so many areas. And we just have to continue to get that message out there.”

Diebler’s messaging has already produced sound results for the program in the recruiting sphere. In addition to the numerous visits Ohio State is garnering from four and five-star prospects this fall, Diebler has secured two key pledges since taking over as head coach, earning in-state commitments from Cleveland Garfield Heights four-star 2026 point guard Marcus Johnson (6-1, 175), the nation’s 29th-best player and No. 2 player in Ohio, and Cleveland Richmond Heights four-star 2025 shooting guard Dorian Jones, also the No. 2-ranked player in Ohio in his class and the 18th-best shooting guard.