

Ohio State Men's Basketball 2019-20 Player Review: Ibrahima Diallo



As part of our offseason men's basketball coverage, Buckeye Sports Bulletin will review the performance of every player who appeared in games for Ohio State last season.

Additionally, we will analyze his place on the team ahead of the 2020-21 campaign. Next up in the series is center Ibrahima Diallo.

Ibrahima Diallo was a late addition when he committed on April 14, 2019 before bringing his 7-foot frame to Columbus last June in preparation for his first collegiate season.

Although Diallo only played in eight games, averaging 5.0 minutes per game across those contests, he showed flashes of his lofty potential as a true freshman.

The most productive game of Diallo's freshman campaign came against Stetson in the Buckeyes' fourth contest of the season. He posted six points, five rebounds and one block on 3-of-6 shooting across 14 minutes, which all represented career highs.

It is unlikely Chris Holtmann expected to give Diallo first-half minutes in the fourth game of the season, but the Buckeyes led 26-3 with 9:09 until halftime against Stetson, so the 7-foot freshman made an early appearance.

With the Buckeyes up 40-8 and just 1:21 until intermission, Diallo sets a ball screen for D.J. Carton, but the point guard does not have a clear path to hit Diallo on the roll. Diallo posts up, but Carton decides to take his man off the dribble and attack the hoop.

The first-year big man from Saly, Senegal shows some savvy by screening for a driving Carton on the block. While offensive fouls have been called for less, it was still a smart move by the freshman center, freeing Carton for the lay-up, resulting in two penalty-less points.



Then, Diallo demonstrates his dynamic athleticism with a powerful explosion for a two-handed dunk off one dribble into the lane assisted by an Andre Wesson bounce pass. Diallo showed good patience by waiting in the short corner until Wesson received the ball in the key, so the last defender had to step up to help on Wesson.

Once Wesson bounced the ball to him, Diallo's decisiveness was critical as he quickly took one dribble into the lane and jammed the ball through the cylinder before hustling back up 82-36.



Coming off an unconventional pass from Danny Hummer, Diallo again demonstrated decisiveness in attacking the basket, but what stood out about his and-1 finish was his body control through contact. Diallo caught Hummer's pass along the baseline and jump-stopped into the lane with a power dribble, gathering himself through contact and exploding up for the finish plus the foul.



With the Buckeye leading comfortably against Purdue-Fort Wayne, Diallo displayed what might be his greatest asset as a post player - his shot-blocking ability. The freshman big man locked down his man, and he erased his shot attempt with a block with his left hand. The play served as an example of when great defense leads to an offensive opportunity, because Diallo gave the ball to Hummer after grabbing the rebound, and Hummer found Justin Ahrens for a wide-open three-pointer in transition.



ANALYSIS

When Diallo was added late to the 2019 class, it was clear that the 7-footer from Senegal would be a work-in-progress for Ohio State.

Coming out of Napa (Calif.) Prolific Prep, Diallo possessed exceptional length and raw athleticism, but his skills needed to be honed. The first-year big man displayed better footwork than expected for a freshman his size and also showed an understanding for the game.

Diallo will have to further improve upon his footwork and crafting his skills to become an all-around threat. Providing size and shot-blocking in the middle will be Diallo's primary responsibility but transforming his raw potential into refined basketball abilities will only help him become a better player.

There will be plenty of opportunity for minutes at the big man spots for the Buckeyes following the departures of Andre and Kaleb Wesson and Alonzo Gaffney. Forwards Kyle Young and E.J. Liddell are the primary returners competing for minutes in the frontcourt, along with transfers Seth Towns and Justice Sueing and freshman forwards Eugene Brown and Zed Key.

While Brown, Sueing and Towns will primarily play on the wing, Young, Liddell and Key will compete more with Diallo for minutes in the middle. How much Diallo plays will likely relate to how well Key plays and if the other forwards can stay healthy.

If given an opportunity, Diallo can make plays for the Scarlet and Gray on both ends of the floor, particularly as a rebounder and rim protector. While he is still a few years away from reaching his high potential, Diallo can help the Buckeyes win games as a sophomore in 2020-21.

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