

Ohio State Men's Basketball 2019-20 Player Review: Duane Washington Jr.



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 guard Duane Washington Jr.

Duane Washington Jr. came to Ohio State as a three-star recruit out of Chatsworth (Calif.) Sierra Canyon, and he has exceeded expectations in his first two seasons in scarlet and gray.

As a sophomore in 2019-20, Washington Jr. was second on the Buckeyes in scoring at 11.5 points per game across 24.9 minutes per contest 28 games with 15 starts. The 6-foot-3, 210-pound guard led Ohio State with 55 three-pointers made, knocking down 39.3 percent of his 140 attempts.

Washington Jr. also added 2.8 rebounds and 1.4 assists per game while leading Ohio State in free-throw percentage at 83.3 percent, making 50 of 60 attempts at the line.

The Buckeye guard enjoyed a hot start to the season and provided a spark throughout the campaign. He showed improvement as a ball handler and defender, while also becoming a more consistent threat in clutch moments.

In Ohio State's third game of the season, Washington Jr. was brilliant in a 76-51 victory against Villanova. He scored 14 points and grabbed five rebounds while connecting on four of his six three-point attempts.



Washington Jr. flashed his athleticism against the Wildcats when C.J. Walker came up with a steal and found him in transition. Washington Jr. caught the ball in stride and slammed a powerful two-handed dunk to send the Buckeye crowd into a frenzy and extend the lead to 14-3.

An example of Washington Jr. drilling a timely shot came against Wisconsin at home, though his 18-

point effort was not enough in a 61-57 loss. With the Buckeyes trailing 55-51 and 57 seconds on the clock, the sophomore guard created separation off a ball screen with a left-handed sidestep dribble and swished a three-pointer to cut the Badger lead to one.



Perhaps the most clutch performance of Washington Jr.'s Ohio State season came in a gritty 61-58 victory at rival Michigan. The Grand Rapids, Mich., native scored 17 points off the Buckeye bench, shooting 7 of 14 from the field and 3 of 6 from beyond the arc across 31 minutes.

With 7:51 left and the score even at 42, a decisive Washington Jr. displayed his improved scoring as a driver, taking three hard dribbles to the rack and finishing a layup despite a foul on Brandon Johns Jr.



With the Buckeyes trailing 49-48, Washington Jr. gave his group a boost when needed, drilling a three-pointer for a two-point lead with 4:54 remaining. Kyle Young kept the play alive with an excellent offensive rebound, but notice how Washington Jr. realizes he is open enough to shoot a three if the ball comes his way - he sets his hands and feet early so his release can happen as quickly as possible.



Again the Buckeyes found themselves down, trailing the Wolverines 56-54 with only 57 seconds left in their building. Washington Jr. rose to the occasion, showing great awareness by relocating to the top of the key when his defender dug down to help on Kaleb Wesson, and then calmly hitting the three-pointer for the lead.



Many players show poor body language down 16 points on the road with less than three minutes to play. Washington Jr. went down fighting while displaying his versatile offensive repertoire for five Buckeye points on two possessions.

Down 77-61, Washington Jr. sprinted up the floor and caught the ball on the right wing and fired a three-pointer in the defender's face with 2:50 left.

Then with 1:40 remaining, the right-handed Washington Jr. used a left-handed, behind-the-back dribble to shake his defender at the top of the key before driving the lane and avoiding the help defender with a strong left-handed finish.



Perhaps the most important part of Washington Jr.'s development was ability to make plays on the dribble drive. In the first half of an Ohio State win at Nebraska, Washington Jr. perfectly navigated a pick and roll with E.J. Liddell. The sophomore guard used a controlled left-handed dribble to attack the help defender and create a seam to make the pass to Liddell for an and-1 finish.



ANALYSIS

Washington Jr. proved to be one of the most important players on the Ohio State roster in 2019-20. When the Buckeyes were a top five team in the country and tearing through their schedule with relative ease, Washington Jr. was scoring at a high rate.

Ohio State added numerous players to its roster including talented transfer wings Justice Sueing and Seth Towns, freshman wing Eugene Brown, freshman big man Zed Key, and backup point guard Abel Porter. Also, Walker, Young, Liddell, Justin Ahrens and Ibrahima Diallo return with Musa Jallow recovering from injury, but none of those players fill the same role as Washington Jr.

The ability to create for himself off the dribble as a guard and knock down three-pointers at an efficient clip makes Washington Jr. a unique weapon for the Buckeyes.

What is essential to Washington Jr.'s continual development is his defense and decision making, which both made a considerable jump from year one to year two.

Now an upperclassman, Washington Jr. could have the opportunity to knock down some of those big shots he hit as a sophomore on a bigger stage.

With another year under Chris Holtmann under his belt, Washington Jr. will be ready to elevate his game to the next level and become a more consistent scoring threat for Ohio State.

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