

Ohio State Officially Elevates Jake Diebler To Head Men's Basketball Coach



Ohio State on Sunday officially announced the hiring of Jake Diebler as head men's basketball coach following his successful end-of-season run as the Buckeyes' interim leader. The agreement, which is good for five years, makes the 37-year-old Diebler the program's 15th head coach as well as the youngest head coach in the Big Ten.

"Jake Diebler possesses all of the characteristics we were seeking as we conducted a very comprehensive and thorough search for a new head coach," incoming athletic director Ross Bjork said. "Those include coaching ability, passion, energy, program knowledge, character, integrity and ties to Ohio. As an Ohio native, the son of a longtime Ohio high school coach and with deep connections to Ohio State, Jake knows what it takes to lead this program on a championship course."

"It's a blessing and a privilege to serve this program and I'm excited for this opportunity," Diebler said. "I'd like to thank Ross Bjork and President Carter for believing in me and the vision that I have moving forward. Ohio State basketball is special and means so much to me and my family. I look forward to serving the entire Ohio State basketball family as best as I possibly can."

Diebler, a Gibsonburg, Ohio, native and brother of former Ohio State guard Jon Diebler, earns the job after a successful eight-game audition in the interim head coaching chair. Taking over a sputtering program that fired former head coach and current Depaul leader Chris Holtmann on Feb. 14 after a 14-11 start to the season that included a stretch of nine Big Ten losses in 11 games, Diebler led the Buckeyes to a 6-2 record in his first eight games, a season-altering stretch that catapulted Ohio State back into the NCAA Tournament conversation and took the Buckeyes from 14th to 10th place in the Big Ten Standings.

Diebler's impact was felt from the onset, where a more fast-paced and free-flowing play style led to a significant upset win over No. 2 Purdue in his first game as interim head coach. After an 88-79 road loss to Minnesota, Diebler then led the Buckeyes on a five-game winning streak, a stretch that included a

road win over Michigan State on that ended the program's 17-game losing streak, a 23-point Senior Day victory over rival Michigan and a wire-to-wire win over Iowa in the second round of the Big Ten Tournament.

While Ohio State's NCAA Tournament hopes faded away with a 77-74 loss to No. 13 Illinois Friday night, its dramatic turnaround under Diebler turned the heads of many currently or formerly involved with the program, with former Ohio State players — such as former All-American forward Jared Sullinger — as well as prominent boosters publicly lobbying for Diebler to be elevated.

That list of supporters also included incoming and outgoing athletic directors Ross Bjork and Gene Smith as well as President Ted Carter, who chose to retain the younger Diebler just two days after the team's loss to Illinois rather than looking outside the program for a more experienced hire.

"Throughout the search, every time we analyzed what was best for the program, our decision kept leading right back to Jake," Bjork said. "The way he has led the program since February 14 has been exemplary and is only the beginning of what lies ahead for Buckeye Basketball. The future is exciting, and I cannot wait to watch him lead this program."

"Our Buckeyes have rallied and shown true grit on the court with Coach Diebler, who has exhibited impressive leadership with the team," said Carter. "In addition to his multiple wins since being named interim head coach, he's been an inspiration to the players. I've gotten to know Jake and I'm confident he will continue to lead the team admirably."

According to a report from the Columbus Dispatch, Ohio State was also strongly considering Florida Atlantic head coach Dusty May for the position, while Xavier's Sean Miller, Alabama's Nate Oats, South Carolina's Lamont Paris and Los Angeles Lakers assistant coach and former Ohio State assistant Chris Jent all emerged as potential candidates.

But Bjork — who previously said that "experience in the chair matters" when it comes to a potential head coaching candidate — instead chose to stay in-house and make the longtime assistant Diebler his first head coaching hire.

Now firmly supplanted in the full-time role, Diebler will now be tasked with leading an Ohio State program that is looking to return to national and Big Ten prominence while also navigating the changing landscape of the sport. The Buckeyes have not made the NCAA Tournament in the last two seasons and last made the Final Four in 2012, an extended drought that Bjork said back in February he hopes the next head coach can change.

But perhaps no coaching candidate understood these expectations and standards more than Diebler, who has deep roots to the program.

Aside from the obvious connections to the program through his brother, Diebler himself has spent eight of his first 14 coaching seasons in Columbus, first as a video coordinator under former head coach Thad Matta from 2014-16, then — after spending three seasons at Vanderbilt — as an assistant/associate head coach on Holtmann's staff from 2019-2024 before being assigned the interim job.

Now, Diebler, who is the first Ohioan to be named Ohio State's head coach in 35 years, will be tasked with leading the program he has spent nearly a decade, this time as a full-time head coach for the first time in his coaching career.