

Ohio State Waiting Until Thursday To Learn First-Round Opponent



For the first time, the NCAA women's tournament expanded to 68 teams this season and will introduce the First Four play-in games, first seen in the men's tournament in 2011.

With those games set to take place on Wednesday and Thursday, that means four teams will not learn their opponent until just two days before they are set to tip off, and Ohio State will be among them. The sixth-seeded Buckeyes, nestled in the Spokane region and set to play the first two rounds in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, will have to wait to see whether they are facing No. 11 Florida State or No. 11 Missouri State.

"I'm happy that they expanded to 68," Ohio State head coach Kevin McGuff said. "I think was the right thing to do for women's basketball. It just does make it a little bit awkward for us not knowing who we're going to play when most people at least know who they're going play at this point."

Regardless of who comes out of Thursday's matchup, Ohio State is expected to have its hands full. Florida State finished the season with a 17-13 record and 10-8 clip in conference, but picked up a pair of ranks wins over No. 20 Notre Dame, 70-65, and No. 22 Georgia Tech, 65-63.

The Seminoles, who average 65.3 points per game on 40.3 percent shooting, won their opening-round matchup against Boston College in the ACC Tournament before falling to NC State, the No. 1 seed in the Bridgeport region.

The Bears, meanwhile, went 24-7 and finished 14-4 in the Missouri Valley Conference. They beat the one ranked opponent they faced in No. 24 Virginia Tech, and defeated Drake in the MVC Tournament before falling to UNI.

Missouri State holds the competition to just 54.6 points per game, which ranks 13th in the nation, though the Bears shoot just 36.9 percent from the field, which is 306th in the country out of 356 teams.

According to Her Hoop Stats, the Bears have a 68.5 percent chance to win on a neutral court, with an expected score of around 63-58. The Bears are coached by Amaka Agugua-Hamilton, who previously spent time on Suzy Merchant's staff at Michigan State.

"She's done an excellent job. She really has. They've won and they've been very successful. She's done a terrific job," McGuff said. "And of course, they're going to match up with Sue Semrau at Florida State. They're used to winning at Florida State and they're used to winning in March, so that's going to be a really intriguing matchup because I think (those are) two great coaches, two teams that are used to winning. There'll be a great game and then either way we're going to have a challenge."

Florida State and Missouri State will play on Thursday with the winner set to take on Ohio State on Saturday. Times have not been announced.