

Ohio State's Leadership "Tested" During Four-Game Losing Stretch



Ohio State's veteran leaders have been put to the test during the Buckeyes' four-game losing streak.

The Buckeyes have gone without a win since Jan. 1, when they took down Northwestern 73-57 on the road, and are enduring the program's longest losing stretch since the 2020-21 season. While Ohio State looks to get back in the win column, head coach Chris Holtmann recognized the value of leadership during this juncture in the season.

"You certainly need your leadership in this moment," Holtmann said. "We're going to need them the rest of the way. I think in January and February, your leadership really gets defined. I'm not putting all of the responsibility on them, but I think it's going to be really critical for the (younger) guys and the older guys to be able to lead in ways that good leaders lead."

Holtmann laid out the responsibilities that good leaders take on, in regard to what he's seen at the college level.

"They control things in the locker room. They limit distractions. They bring perspective. They have poise in the midst of challenging moments," Holtmann said. "They communicate and play for each other. They lead the way in playing for each other, they lead the way in their own (selflessness). They play for Ohio State, they come to work, and are everyday guys."

"That's what's going to be needed in these moments and I think that's the challenge in front of those guys."

Holtmann noted that Ohio State's captains — Zed Key, Justice Sueing and Isaac Likekele — have evolved into that leadership role but added that they'll continue to face challenges, especially during the current stretch.

“Our captains — Justice leading the way with that — are growing into that role,” Holtmann said. “But again, that is going to continue to get tested here these last several weeks. So that story is still being written.”

Key noted that the mood in the Ohio State locker room has remained “good” despite the losing streak, and added that the Buckeye captains are trying to keep things light while placing a focus on growth moving forward.

“We have a lot of new faces and young guys, so we’re trying to stay positive,” Key said. “It can be a lot on their spirits, losing four games in a row, it takes a toll. But, we’re trying to stay positive, just move on and get better every day and correct our mistakes.”

Looking forward, Sueing added that it’s the veterans’ responsibility to get the team back on track with a bout against Nebraska looming on Wednesday.

“As far as a player-led locker room, it’s our responsibility that guys are able to move on,” Sueing said. “We’re able to continue to push them and make sure that we’re continuing to get better.”