

Ohio State's Transfer Portal Efforts Conclude With Addition Of Mahaffey



With five confirmed departures from last season, and forward Brice Sensabaugh's status in limbo as well, Ohio State head coach Chris Holtmann eyed the transfer portal for reinforcements this offseason.

As the Buckeyes will welcome a four-man recruiting class this season, Holtmann also brought in veteran players to fit into the roster and fill necessary areas of need. Ohio State's roster for the 2023-24 season is nearly set, with the Buckeyes just waiting on Sensabaugh to announce whether he will remain in the draft or return to OSU. Sensabaugh has until May 31 to make his decision.

Ohio State brought in the transfer haul of Minnesota forward Jamison Battle, Baylor guard Dale Bonner and Penn State wing Evan Mahaffey, which ranks No. 32 in the nation according to 247Sports. While the ranking doesn't jump off the page, Holtmann's transfer portal efforts helped fill several areas of need for the Buckeyes.

Starting with Battle, the 6-7 forward provides the Buckeyes with a versatile presence in the frontcourt. A volume scorer, Battle is a constant threat with the ball in his hands, posting career averages of 14.4 points and 5.2 rebounds on 42.0 percent shooting and 35.0 percent from three. For his career, Battle averages 7.1 three-point attempts per game, helping the Buckeyes fill the shooting loss of Sean McNeil while also addressing their need for a versatile power forward.

Last season, Battle saw a steep decline in efficiency, largely due to an offseason surgery that held him out for Minnesota's first six games. Battle shot career-lows from the field (37.1 percent) and deep (31.1 percent) while his 12.4 points per game were his lowest since his freshman season at George Washington. He also registered a career-low 3.8 rebounds per game last season. But, with a full offseason, Battle could see a resurgence for the Buckeyes in the final season of his collegiate career.

Bonner provides the Buckeyes with needed veteran depth in the backcourt, with Ohio State's starting guard spots likely held down by sophomores Bruce Thornton and Roddy Gayle Jr. Bonner went from

being the star of his team at Division-II level Fairmont State to a rotation contributor at Baylor, and although it took some time for him to settle into the role, he provided the Bears with solid play off of the bench in his second season with the program.

During his first season at Baylor, Bonner shot just 33.7 percent — including an abysmal 19.2 percent from deep — while averaging just 3.1 points per game. But Bonner found his rhythm last season, seeing his shooting numbers increase to 44.1 percent from the field and 37.2 percent from three while producing 4.7 points per game.

Bonner's calling card, however, is his playmaking ability, as well as his pesky perimeter defense. He produced 2.7 assists to 1.2 turnovers per game last season in his 19.4 minutes per game, while also swiping 1.4 steals. He'll provide the Buckeyes with some veteran leadership, as well as be a steady hand to operate the offense off of the bench if need be.

While Battle and Bonner each boast four seasons of college basketball experience, Holtmann eyed youth in his final transfer portal addition. The Buckeyes secured the commitment of the 19-year-old Mahaffey, who played out his freshman season at Penn State, on Wednesday.

Mahaffey provides the Buckeyes with positional versatility, carrying the ability to play both in the backcourt and frontcourt. While he didn't see the floor much during his first collegiate season, averaging 9.4 minutes per game, he was an efficient offensive presence — shooting 56.9 percent from the field — while also providing the Nittany Lions with solid perimeter defense.

The addition of Mahaffey is largely rooted in his potential, as it also puts him on the same track as Ohio State's breakout freshmen from last season. During his high school days at Cincinnati Archbishop Moeller, Mahaffey landed on the All-Ohio first team as a senior by scoring 15.7 points per game and pulling down 7.1 rebounds per contest while shooting 63.8 percent from the field.

While the statistics may not leap off of the page when it comes to the three transfers, Holtmann's portal haul helped fill several key areas for the Buckeyes entering the 2023-24 season.