

Preview: Inside Vs. Outside When Ohio State, Houston Play Sunday



TULSA, Okla. — A matchup will have the inside game of Ohio State sophomore center Kaleb Wesson against the outside play of Houston guard Corey Davis when the Buckeyes and Cougars meet in the second round of the NCAA Tournament Midwest Regional at BOK Center in Tulsa, Okla., on Sunday (8:40 p.m., TNT).

The 11-seeded Buckeyes (20-14) vie for their first spot in the Sweet 16 since 2013. The third-seed Cougars (32-3) haven't been there since 1984.

The winner plays No. 2 seed Kentucky (26-5) next Friday at the Sprint Center in Kansas City. The Wildcats defeated Wofford 62-56 on Saturday.

Wesson was dominant in the 62-59 first round win over Iowa State on Friday with 21 points, 15 in the second half, and 12 rebounds.

Davis, meanwhile, was 9 for 22 from the floor, including 7 for 17 from three-point line, for 26 points in the Cougars' 84-55 win over Georgia State on Friday.

"He's a terrific shooter and it's kind of what he does," Ohio State coach Chris Holtmann said. "The way Georgia State plays with their matchup principles I think they did a great job finding him for open threes."

Holtmann said his staff categorizes shooters by their type of shots and what else they can do.

"If he's shooting 75 percent strictly threes, we have a category for that," he said of Davis. "He's a little bit more capable than that. He can do everything."

Davis (6-1, 190) averages 16.9 points and 3.3 rebounds.

OSU sophomore guard Musa Jallow has been defending the opponents' top scorers.

"I feel like the effort and the energy that I can bring to the team is extremely important for our team," he said.

Houston coach Kelvin Sampson, who could be asked how's the weather and would give you the temperature on Mars in a five-minute soliloquy, was effusive in his praise of Wesson.

"He's big and strong and physical. The fact that he's big and strong and physical is not what makes him really good. It's his basketball IQ," Sampson said. "He's got great hands. He understands how to play. They do a good job of playing through him. They put you in positions where you have to play him one-on-one sometimes.

"The kid that we've played similar to him was last year the kid for Wichita State, Shaq Morris. Very similar. Shaq wasn't as skilled as this kid, didn't have - he couldn't step out and make a three, for instance. Wasn't going to lead the team in assists from the 5-spot. But he could score the ball just as good.

"We haven't seen a kid his size that can post you, pass it, shoot it, score it like him. ... It's unique to the (Wesson) kid. He's a really good player."

As good as Wesson is, he is prone to spending stretches on the bench because of foul trouble. He went to the bench with 6:31 left in the first half vs. Iowa State after collecting his second foul. He remained there until the start of the second half.

Wesson (6-9, 270) played all but 19 seconds of the final 20 minutes and was charged with his third foul with 7:37 remaining but was not substituted the rest of the way in the physical game that saw him earn seven of his nine drawn fouls in the second half.

Houston senior guard Galen Robinson expects the Buckeyes to carry their Big-Ten style ruggedness into the game.

"You know, they're a big dominant, physical team," he said. "They got a dominant, dynamic 5-man (Wesson) as well as guards on the perimeter. Different kind of feel and brand of basketball than we're used to playing an opponent. We're just a bunch of dogs. We're ready for anything that anybody may throw at us."

Holtmann has seen his team survive without Wesson but would rather not have to again. He praised Wesson for his effort vs. Iowa State but said Houston will have a different strategy.

"I thought he was really smart in his attack," the coach said. "Now, the challenge for him is Houston is going to play him differently. They're going to limit some of his touches. They are going to do some things different when he catches it that will be different than Iowa State.

"He's going to have to figure out how to impact the game in different ways. He needs to score the ball for us but he needs to do it in other ways as well. He's going to need to have another game, and this is the challenge, to put another game together of that caliber performance where he can stay out of foul trouble. He needs consistency in that area."

Cougars junior guard Armoni Brooks said there is a plan to defend Wesson.

"The way we guard the post I think it makes it difficult to score," he said. "He's a really good passer, too, so we have to make sure we clog the paint to make sure there are no cutters so when they get the ball, they don't have any room and we put pressure on the ball and and not let passes get to their

guards so they can shoot.”

Houston senior forward Breanon Brady (6-8, 260) will have the task of guarding Wesson in the battle of Ohio. Wesson went Westerville South near Columbus; Brady attended Akron Ellet.

“The biggest thing is playing smart,” Brady said. “He’s a big guy, I’m a big guy, just try not to wrestle with him, not get a technical foul or anything. It’s all about staying on the court. That’s going to be my biggest challenge, how can I stay on the court and help my team out?”

The same can be said for Wesson.

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