

Sueing Shines In First Game Back From Injury



It was a long road back to the court for Justice Sueing.

The Ohio State redshirt senior forward had not played in an organized basketball game in 360 days prior to the Buckeyes' season-opening win over Robert Morris, but, Sueing appeared to be right back to form against the Colonials despite the long time away from the floor. Sueing dazzled the 9,141 Buckeye fans that descended on the Schottenstein Center for Monday's game by dropping a game-high 20 points — nearly reaching his best mark as a Buckeye, which sits at 22 against Illinois on March 14, 2020 — while adding a pair of rebounds and assists alongside a trio of steals.

Just prior to tip-off, Sueing bowed his head for a brief prayer before looking up and letting out a roar — a signal that he was ready for war. As Sueing appeared to be back at full strength, he reflected on his journey back to the court and how it felt to be back in the scarlet and gray.

"It was really emotional," Sueing said. "I talked to my pops before this, just talking about how God put me through these couple of hurdles I had to deal with over this past year. It built me to be stronger as a man and as a player.

"It was just a quick little prayer to thank God," he continued. "Then, I yelled at the goal to get hyped and I was right into it."

Sueing was, by far, the most impactful Buckeye to see the floor on Monday, as he keyed Ohio State's 27-13 run — after the Buckeyes fell into a 15-13 hole early in the opening frame — to close the first half, by cashing a pair of threes to extend OSU's lead to eight with 6:29 to go in the opening frame. Sueing provided the Buckeyes with 12 first-half points, aiding OSU through a rough offensive start.

The second half was more of the same for Sueing, as he hit four of his six shot attempts in the frame. While Sueing impressed for much of the evening, his most noteworthy play came on one of his last of the contest. With the Buckeyes up 69-44 and 8:50 remaining in the contest, the Colonials swung the ball along the perimeter — trying to find an avenue to score — however, Sueing diagnosed the play and

jumped in front of a pass before corralling the loose ball and going the distance for an easy breakaway slam.

Although he showed out in a big way for the Buckeyes, OSU head coach Chris Holtmann stressed patience for Sueing going forward — noting there are still areas he needs to get stronger in as he gets reacclimated to the grind of college basketball.

“He’s going to have some rust that he’s going to have to shake off, we saw that in the (closed-door) scrimmage. He was just rusty in spots,” Holtmann said. “Tonight, it was hard to notice. He was pretty clean in a lot of ways.

“I thought he had a really clean game, limited his turnovers,” Holtmann said. “He has to be a guy defensively that we can count on.”

Although Sueing came up with just two rebounds against the Colonials — one offensive and one defensive — Holtmann stressed that he is going to be a vital part of the Buckeyes’ efforts on the glass this season.

“The addition of Justice really helps on both ends,” Holtmann said. “We really miss his rebounding when he’s not there. I think he’s as good of a rebounder as there is at the wing position in the country, so we really miss it. He’s just so physical and has great hands.”

As the Buckeyes began their conquest for their first Big Ten title and Sweet 16 appearance under Holtmann on Monday, Sueing emphasized that he felt at ease being on the court with teammates and was ecstatic to be able to make an impact on this Ohio State team again.

“I just finally felt comfortable to be out there healthy with these guys,” Sueing said. “I know we worked really hard these past couple of weeks, past couple of months, really since the summertime to get here. Now that the season is actually here, we’re going to take it one day at a time but I’m glad we were able to take this one tonight.”