

Buckeyes Draw Six Seed, Will Play Minnesota Or Penn State



The Big Ten tournament field is set, and the Buckeyes have their draw. After a 75-69 loss to Michigan on March 6, Ohio State's third loss in its final four games, the Buckeyes locked into the Big Ten's No. 6 seed, slated to match up with the winner of the No. 11-No. 14 matchup at 9 p.m. on March 10, with the winner there moving on to take on the No. 3 seed in the quarterfinals on March 11, also at 9 p.m.

It was a sharp fall from grace for the Buckeyes, who looked all but set as the No. 4 seed with a double-bye after upsetting Illinois on Feb. 27 in Champaign. They had a full game advantage over everyone else battling for the spot and just needed to take three of their final four games against Maryland, Nebraska, Michigan State and Michigan, which would eventually shake out as the league's No. 10, 13, 7 and 8 seeds respectively.

Instead, they dropped three of those last four to the three lowest seeds of the bunch, dropping a road game against Maryland 75-60, a home bout with the Cornhuskers 78-70 and that season-ender against the Wolverines, while knocking off the Spartans 80-69, also at home. In fact, had the Buckeyes just toppled the Wolverines, they would have claimed the No. 4 seed as Iowa fell to Illinois in the final Big Ten game of the regular season. Even a win over the Cornhuskers or Terrapins, in retrospect, would have locked up a pair of byes.

In its current draw, though, the Buckeyes will be awaiting the result of No. 11 Penn State against No. 14 Minnesota on March 9, set to tip 25 minutes after the end of Northwestern-Nebraska, which is slated for 6 p.m. If OSU can beat that winner, it will draw No. 3 Purdue in the quarterfinals, with No. 2 Wisconsin, No. 7 Michigan State and No. 10 Maryland on the OSU side of the bracket as well. Illinois and Rutgers fill out the other two double-byes - the top-seeded Illini will face the winner of Michigan and No. 9 Indiana, the Scarlet Knights have either No. 5 Iowa or the winner of March 9's first matchup.

The Buckeyes swept their potential second-round draws in the regular season, but fell in their lone matchup with the Boilermakers and went 3-2 against potential semifinal matchups, slotting them at 7-3 against teams on their side of the bracket and 5-5 against the other half.

Ohio State toppled Penn State 76-64 on the road back on Dec. 5 and upended it 61-56 at home a month

later despite shooting only 38.6 percent from the field. The Buckeyes went without a field goal in the final five minutes of that game but hit 10 free throws across that span to survive. Minnesota, meanwhile, didn't come quite as close as the Nittany Lions. Ohio State dominated the Golden Gophers on the boards to take a 75-64 win in Minneapolis on Jan. 27 - their first road win against Minnesota in seven years - and rode a huge second half on Feb. 15 for a 70-45 win after trailing at the break, 25-23.

Penn State enters the tournament having won only one of its last five games, though it did take both Illinois and Rutgers to the final minutes on the road, losing 60-55 to the Illini on March 3 and 59-58 to the Scarlet Knights on March 6. The Nittany Lions did prove a tough out for the Big Ten's upper crust all season, finishing with just a 3-8 mark but coming within three scores in five (Illinois, Ohio State, Purdue, Rutgers, Wisconsin) of those losses. They upset Rutgers on Jan. 11, 66-49; Iowa on Jan. 31, 90-86 (2OT) and Michigan State on Feb. 15, 62-58.

Minnesota has claimed only three victories since the calendar turned over to 2022, starting the season 10-1 but finishing it 13-16 with just four league wins. It went 1-10 with two three-score losses (Michigan State (2), Wisconsin (2)) against the top seven, pulling off an upset over Rutgers on Jan. 22, 68-65. The Nittany Lions and Golden Gophers split the season series, with Penn State winning its home 67-46 on Feb. 17, and Minnesota defending its home court on Feb. 12, 76-70.