

Buckeyes Will Be Without Young On Thursday



Ohio State doesn't yet know who it will be facing off with in the second round of the Big Ten Tournament on March 10, and won't know until Minnesota and Penn State square off tonight. But, the Buckeyes do know at least one obstacle they'll need to overcome in the matchup, as forward Kyle Young has been ruled out for the third straight game, head coach Chris Holtmann reported March 9.

The super senior forward didn't play against Michigan State or Michigan to end the season and missed most of Ohio State's loss to Nebraska on March 1 after entering the concussion protocol early in that battle. Holtmann said that any further decisions on his availability if the Buckeyes do advance in the tournament have yet to be made, though it seems unlikely that his status would change within the course of 24 hours.

Concussions are no new issue to Young. He had his 2020-21 season altered significantly by a pair of concussions, the latter of which ended his campaign ahead of postseason play - and contributed to Ohio State's first round loss against Oral Roberts. Whether this one will be season-ending is still unclear, but Holtmann didn't sound overly optimistic about the kind of rehabilitation Ohio State can get done between the end of the regular season, the start and end of Big Ten tournament play and the start of the national competition.

"I wouldn't say we've had a ton of time to rest, it's not all that much time," Holtmann said. Our guys may have been fatigued - it was an unprecedented amount of games - but the only game I really noticed it was Maryland. We really lacked a lot of juice there. Perhaps it was evident elsewhere but I maybe didn't notice it as much."

As for replacing Young, Ohio State may get a boost if it can get Zed Key back on the floor. He's been hampered by an ankle injury that he reaggravated against Michigan, but Holtmann said he's a game-time decision ahead of Thursday's matchup. In place of Key and Young, Ohio State has turned to Joey Brunk in the paint and Eugene Brown III as a contributor at the power forward spot, not a usual position for him, in hopes of filling in for Key's size in the case of the former and Young's versatility for the former.

“(Not having) Kyle’s versatility hurts us. When he’s out, it affects our defense in a significant way, because you have another versatile front-line guy that you can switch with,” Holtmann said.

“We didn’t see Gene as this, we imagined him as more of a wing - which he has been - who can be more switchable and play that. We’ve done that in times and by necessity we need to do it because of (the injuries). Those have forced Gene to play that role when we do want to play small. But we can’t play E.J. and then four guys who are 6-3 or under.

“Gene’s been a little inconsistent. He had a really good game against Indiana, he’s had some moments but he has to guard the ball better and he has to rebound better for us. Those are the things he can bring to this team. Be an active cutter, be willing to shoot when it’s there, but the keys for us (are in defense and rebounding).”