

Dorka Juhasz Leaves Ohio State To Develop, Follow Professional Aspirations



This is part of a full story that can be found in the April 24 print edition of Buckeye Sports Bulletin. For four free issues of the print edition, no card required, sign up at the link here: <http://www.buckeyesports.com/subscribe-4issue-trial/>

On April 3, Dorka Juhasz announced on Twitter she was entering the transfer portal after three seasons with Ohio State.

Nine days later, Juhasz had found her new home. The 6-4 forward again went to Twitter, this time to say she has committed to UConn, a program that has made 13 consecutive Final Four appearances and has won 11 national championships since Geno Auriemma has taken over as head coach.

When talking with Buckeye Sports Bulletin, Juhasz said the transfer process was “busy” and “overwhelming,” with her phone ringing multiple times a day across a timespan that lasted just over a week. But she also said that once UConn gave her a call, the Huskies moved right to the forefront of her decision.

“Once I entered a portal, it was just craziness,” Juhasz said. “Whenever UConn reached out to me, that was definitely eye opening, and I definitely put them on the top of my list with some other great schools. It was exciting just to do that again, going through that process again and getting to know the coaches and the program again, and now that I have some experience with the recruiting process from three years ago, I think it was a little bit easier just to look at the important little details that will make a difference between schools.”

The decision to join the Huskies was the same as the reason Juhasz initially decided to transfer to Ohio State: a basketball one.

Juhasz emphasized the desire to continue to improve as a player, as well as her aspirations to play at the professional level as the key reasons why she ultimately decided it was her time to leave the Buckeyes. All that, along with her ability to graduate in three years, made it the right time for her to make the move.

“Since our season ended, I had time to reflect on how this season and the past three years went, and

obviously focusing more on the school, just making sure I finish my education here and get my degree and everything,” Juhasz said. “I loved Ohio State. I love the people here, and it will always be very close to my heart, but I just felt like it was a basketball decision. I just felt like I have so much more to give, and it was kind of like the perfect timing for me to take the extra step in my future just to get ready for my professional career and just looking forward to achieve my goals. I just felt like it was something that I needed to do in order to move forward in life.

“Graduating from here, they can never take that away from me and so that was just something that I had time and I talked to my parents and family, and it’s just something that I felt like I have to do in order to bring the best version out of myself on the basketball court.”

Another thing that played a factor, though a smaller one, was the self-imposed postseason ban given down from Ohio State for the 2020-21 season after the Patrick Klein investigation. That left Juhasz and the Buckeyes out of the NCAA tournament for the third year in a row.

Juhasz’s first season missing was due to a lackluster 14-15 campaign in 2018-19, while the other two years were due to circumstances out of her control, with the 2019-20 tournament being canceled due to COVID-19.

But the postseason ban last season was specifically difficult for Juhasz and the team as a whole, and it did have a role in the forward’s decision to move on.

“It was super hard. I think it was hard on all of us,” Juhasz said of the ban. “I’ve been here for three years, but I haven’t been to the NCAA tournament once, so obviously that played a factor. It wasn’t the biggest factor, but that also played a factor just not being able to get there. It kind of left emptiness inside of me just not being able to compete at the national level for three years, that definitely played a little role. Obviously it wasn’t the main factor why I left, but yeah, definitely played a little role in it.”

What did not play a factor, though, is Juhasz’s relationship with Ohio State men’s basketball forward Musa Jallow. Jallow announced he was entering the transfer portal four days prior to Juhasz’s announcement, but the two did not influence each other’s decision, despite the thoughts of some users on social media.

“It was kind of funny just reading the comments. We’ve been talking, but that was not something that we did because the other one did it,” Juhasz said. “Our two reasons for leaving are super different, so it’s not like there’s anything against Ohio State, we both love Ohio State, but it’s something that obviously happened at the same time so it kind of made people wonder if it’s a package deal, are we going somewhere together, but it has nothing to do with it.

“I want the best for him and his basketball career, and if that was that he had to leave and go somewhere else, I was supporting 100 percent, and I know that he’s supporting me 100 percent. He’s very excited for me to go to UConn and just play there and everything, but it’s not really a factor, it’s not like we have to go somewhere close.”

The two-time, first-team All-Big Ten forward now joins a Huskies team that finished last season with a 28-2 record, falling in the Final Four to Arizona as the No. 1 overall seed in the tournament.

Auriemma’s Huskies are currently set to return their entire roster from that run, save for guard Anna Makurat, who left to play overseas. That returning roster includes seven freshmen from the 2020-21

campaign, one of which is guard Paige Bueckers, the national player of the year.

As far as the forward position goes, UConn often started four guards with Olivia Nelson-Adoda as the presence inside. Freshman Aaliyah Edwards also saw significant time during the season and played a major role in their NCAA tournament run.

But Nelson-Adoda shot just 4 of 15 from three last season, while Edwards did not attempt a shot from deep. Juhasz said her ability to stretch the floor on the offense could give her a specific role, but that she knows nothing is promised once she arrives in Storrs, Conn.

“There’s not any promises. That’s something I really liked about them, there was not any promises that if come here, you’re going to play this much,” Juhasz said. “I think that’s what I need. All I need is an opportunity, all I need is an opportunity to actually get in the gym and show what I can do and just work hard every single day to fight for my spot.

“There are many great players, so I’m not even assuming anything with how much I’m going to play. I have self confidence, obviously. I think if I work really hard, I can be really helpful for this team to contribute in what I can bring to that team just playing kind of like inside-outside. So I’m not really assuming, that’s like the main thing, I’m just really grateful for the opportunity. Just to be a part of that program and be surrounded by great players that are going to push me and be surrounded by great coaches that are going to push me and make sure I’m doing everything right.”

Juhasz leaves Ohio State with 975 points and 722 total rebounds in 75 games, good for 13.0 points and 9.6 rebounds per game. She helped the Buckeyes reach the Big Ten championship game in her sophomore year and kept Ohio State in the top 25 for the entirety of the 2020-21 season.

But the thing that Juhasz will remember the most from her time with the Buckeyes are the fans and relationships she made that she will take with her, both to UConn and wherever the road leads after that.

“Playing games in front of our fans, that’s something that I will always remember,” Juhasz said. “That was just something that I wasn’t very familiar with at home. We did not have that many fans, especially at a college level, and it was great to see that how many people loved Ohio State basketball and came out to support us.

“And obviously all the relationships I built. I know that even if I’m leaving, I’m still going to have those connections with them and it’s not going to be like ‘All right, I leave and I’ll never talk to them again.’ I know they’re all my friends, and all the people that I have a good relationship and close relationship, I think everybody is very happy for me and know that it’s in my best interest.”