

Edey Looms Over Ohio State-Purdue Matchup



Following in the long line of Purdue 7-footers, 7-4, 305-pound junior center Zach Edey has emerged as a dominant threat to any opponent.

The Toronto native has led Purdue to a 13-1 start to the season, while the Boilermakers have held the No. 1 ranking in the AP Poll since Dec. 12. Edey's size and touch have made him a matchup nightmare, averaging 21.7 points and 13.4 rebounds per game while shooting an efficient 63.2 percent clip from the field.

Although Ohio State has battled Edey multiple times across the past two seasons, Buckeyes head coach Chris Holtmann said Thursday's matchup will be different due to Edey's increased usage within the Boilermaker offense.

"(He gets) more consistent minutes, more consistent touches. He's now the primary focal point, where last year, it was he and (Trevion) Williams," Holtmann said. "If you guys had asked me in the preseason, I would've said 'Hey, Zach Edey is going to be in the running for Big Ten Player of the Year and maybe national player of the year.' His usage rate was good while he was on the floor, but he wasn't on the floor as much as we expected him to be this year."

While Edey had not been placed at the center of the Purdue offense in the previous two seasons, he still gave Ohio State fits at points in his career. As a freshman, Edey registered 11 points and three rebounds in 16 minutes during Purdue's Big Ten Tournament loss to the Buckeyes in 2020-21. In their lone meeting last season, Edey punished Ohio State for 20 points on 7-of-9 shooting while adding a trio of rebounds, a pair of blocks, and a steal.

The burden of defending Edey has largely fallen on Ohio State forward Zed Key, who entered the college ranks alongside the Purdue big man. Key acknowledged the challenges of defending Edey while adding that it takes a team effort to slow him down.

"Their team is finding him in the right spots," Key said. "Obviously, he's 7-4 so they can just lob the ball to him and he can just go up to dunk it. Watching film on him, he's worked on his touch, and it's gotten better. We should be good against him, just playing physical against him and we should be solid."

Edey also gets to the free throw line at a high level, leading the Big Ten with 104 attempts from the charity stripe. The junior center has connected on 73.1 percent of his free throw attempts this season.

Although Edey's presence looms large over the matchup, both Key and Holtmann emphasized that he's just one piece of the puzzle for the Boilermakers.

"He's a human cheat code. He's the most dominant player in college basketball, and we know that. So it's going to take a team effort," Holtmann said. "But they also have other guys that can score and other guys that can impact the game."