

Healthy, Slimmer Zed Key Poised To Make Bigger Impact For Buckeyes



For Ohio State forward Zed Key, his 2022-23 season — much like the team’s — was a tale of two halves. Key was emerging as one of the Big Ten’s premier frontcourt players through Jan. 5 — when the team held a respectable 10-3 record — averaging an efficient 13.4 points and 8.4 rebounds per game, while also showcasing his improved shooting from the perimeter, shooting 63.5 percent from the field.

That all changed during the Buckeyes’ battle with then-No. 1 Purdue, where he suffered a left shoulder sprain, a nagging ailment that both impeded his production and shut down his season after the team’s Feb. 12 game against Iowa.

“It felt bad throughout the game,” Key said during Ohio State’s media day on Monday. “(My shoulder) kept popping out. I was in a lot of pain. So I just made the decision to get surgery (on Feb. 22) and start the process of recovery.”

While he was forced to watch the remainder of his junior season slowly slip away from the sidelines, Key and the program’s decision to get on top of the injury and undergo surgery before the season ended has allowed him to develop a newfound confidence — as well as a new-look frame — heading into his fourth and final season at Ohio State.

“(My shoulder is) good,” Key said. “It’s 100 percent. I just want to give credit to the training staff, they gotta be back right to 100 percent. After the surgery, they had me in the training room and weight room, just trying to strengthen it and just get it back to 100 percent. It feels really good. It feels stable and I feel like I did before the surgery. I’m excited to play this year.”

Key worked throughout the offseason with the training staff to regain full mobility and strength in his shoulder, but that was not the only thing he looked to improve upon. According to the Bayshore, New York, native, he also spent the summer slimming down, cutting his weight from 253 to 235 pounds. This was a gradual change for Key, who said he wanted to walk the fine line between losing fat and losing muscle.

“I just thought, ‘Let’s lose some weight and see how I feel,’” Key said. “As I lost 10 pounds, I was like, ‘Ok, I feel good down here. I notice a difference, at 10 pounds. So let’s keep it going.’ I didn’t want to lose too much weight and be like 215, that’s not feasible, but at 230, I feel like it’s optimal. My body

feels great out there.”

This weight loss has paid dividends for the Buckeyes’ fourth-year forward so far this offseason. Key said it has allowed him to feel quicker and more agile in the post, which can help him return to, or even exceed, the production he had on the court towards the beginning of his junior season.

“Losing this much weight, I feel better on the court,” Key said. “Even on the joints, conditioning wise, athletically, I feel great out there on the court. It definitely helped me for the better...I definitely feel quicker and more explosive, it definitely helped me a lot.”