

Jamison Battle, Buckeyes Feel There Is More To Accomplish in 2023-24 As Calander Flips To March



In the final minutes of Ohio State's 78-69 victory over Nebraska on Thursday night — the team's third win in four games under interim head coach Jake Diebler — fifth-year forward Jamison Battle seemed to wear all of his emotions on his sleeve. After connecting on a floater with just 1:32 left in the game to put the Buckeyes up 77-67 and give him a season-high 32 points on the night, the Minnesota transfer ran to center court and emphatically gestured to the Value City Arena crowd, a strong showing of emotion from the otherwise even-keeled veteran that he said was an attempt to show those watching that his team was not going down without a fight this season.

"I was just looking at a few of my buddies in the crowd — one of my boys from Minnesota came down — so I just let them know that we're not done," Battle said. "You could say 'I'm him,' but it's a collective effort. I know this team wants more than to just end the season after the Big Ten Tournament."

Battle's increased emotion on Thursday night reflected a team-wide emphasis on finishing the season strong and playing with an increased edge and urgency under the leadership of Diebler, a mentality that the interim head coach said has especially come to light in the last few weeks.

"I think collectively, from everybody in our program, we've all talked about trying to find a way to get that (emotion) to come out more and play with more passion," Diebler said "I think certainly, I need to lead by example in that. I probably led by a little too much of an example at times tonight — a ref told me I crossed half court once or twice — I have to clean that up, certainly.

"But our guys are playing with it with a great sense of togetherness. They're celebrating not necessarily plays that they make, but they're celebrating each other's plays at a high level. And that goes all the way through our program. We've practiced that way, our staff has done a great job with that. So I think our guys are cutting loose a little bit from the passion standpoint and having some fun within the competitiveness of the game, which has been fun for us to see them doing that."

This increased passion and energy was evident from the get-go against Nebraska — especially with

Battle — who exploded for the team's first 11 points in his first game back since missing the Feb. 25 Michigan State game with an ankle injury. Battle said that this fast start not only stemmed from the team's renewed "urgency" but also a realization that his five-year college basketball career is nearing its end, which he said motivated him to maximize all of what's left from this season.

"I have three guaranteed games left in college basketball," Battle said. "And my goal is that we're going to do whatever it takes to win all those games, and maybe even more. So I think there's a sense of urgency for us, and you can see how good this team can really be. There's still room for improvement. It's exciting, but there's still work to be done. And I think there are goals to be accomplished, and we're ready to go."

While Battle — along with fellow seniors Dale Bonner, Zed Key and Owen Spencer, who will be honored Sunday afternoon at Senior Day against Michigan — are all feeling a sense of urgency to finish their Buckeye careers on a high note, the fifth-year also said that this is a feeling that is shared throughout the roster, where they are embracing the challenges that lie ahead of them in March and poised to extend their season beyond the conference tournament.

"It's February 29 today, tomorrow is March," Battle said. "I think that's the biggest thing, the madness begins tomorrow. We're not ready to fold. We're not ready to go home. That's the mentality that we have. March is upon us. Let the madness begin."