

Junior Guard Evan Mahaffey Poised To Take On Expanded Role In Backcourt This Season



When Ohio State sophomore guard Taison Chatman went down with a season-ending ACL injury during a summer workout in June, it left a considerable void in the Buckeyes' backcourt for the upcoming 2024-25 season that had head coach Jake Diebler and his staff searching for creative ways to find added production in the backcourt.

Luckily for Diebler and the Buckeyes, they may have found a potential solution to this problem in junior Evan Mahaffey, who said on June 9 that he is willing — and looking forward to — taking on an added role in the backcourt in his second season with the program.

“(Playing in the backcourt) is something I love to do,” the 6-6 Mahaffey said. “I’ve been mixing it in my whole life. In high school, I was on the perimeter a lot more. But I love it. I know we’ve had different conversations over time about moving me to the perimeter more.”

Playing on the perimeter is something Mahaffey rarely did in his first season with the Buckeyes. With Bruce Thornton and now Michigan Wolverine Roddy Gayle Jr. occupying the two starting guard spots last year, Mahaffey played mostly at the wing or forward positions, where he used his unique length and athleticism to record 4.3 points, 4.2 rebounds, 1.7 assist and 1.0 steals per game while also recording 25 blocks in 36 appearances, including 35 starts.

But as Mahaffey alluded to, he does have some prior experience playing in the backcourt. While he was listed as a power forward, Mahaffey often thrived on the perimeter at Archbishop Moeller as a senior, averaging 8.1 points per game while also leading the Greater Catholic League-South conference in assists per game (3.6) and shooting percentage (62.9).

But despite these successes, Mahaffey said he is still working to fine-tune his backcourt skills this offseason with the Buckeyes, particularly with his ball-handling and outside shooting. He struggled at times in these two aspects last season, making just two of his 17 attempts from beyond the arc, good for an uninspiring 11.8 percent, while also committing 33 turnovers, the fifth-most on the team.

“(I’m) just making sure my abilities, my ball-handling, my shooting, my decision-making are getting better each day so that you can trust me up there. So honestly I love it. I love being challenged in that way, too.”

Regardless of what role he takes on for Ohio State this upcoming season, Mahaffey said he is willing to contribute to the team in any way possible and deal with any lumps that may come with being tasked with playing multiple positions, a challenge that he said he is ready to take on after last season’s experiences.

“(I learned last season) to stay with my game through the ups and downs of the season,” Mahaffey said. “Obviously, there’s always ups and downs, everyone has their highs and lows in a season. But it’s just staying in a positive mindset. Being able to contribute whether you are on the court or off the court, no matter what position you are playing. Just being able to help out wherever I can and keep building trust.”