

Kaleb Wesson Leads Buckeyes To Victory In Return



The Ohio State men's basketball team welcomed back Kaleb Wesson from suspension, and the sophomore center led the Buckeyes to victory against Indiana, 79-75.

Kaleb Wesson served a three-game suspension for violating athletic department policy, and the Buckeyes were winless in his absence. Ohio State performed poorly without its starting center, ranking last in the country in effective field goal percentage throughout the stretch.

"It was a lot of soul-searching during those two weeks," Kaleb Wesson said, "just really my priorities and what I really was about. I feel like in those two weeks it really hurt seeing my teammates out there and not being able to contribute, not helping them when I know I can contribute to that part of the game. So, just being able to be out there again was great."

The Westerville (Ohio) South product wasted no time making his presence felt, scoring Ohio State's first points on a pair of free throws and knocking down a three-pointer to give the Buckeyes an early 11-5 lead.

"He made a pretty big impact on the game," sophomore forward Kyle Young said of Kaleb Wesson. "It's good having him back, and getting to play with him again, for sure."

Kaleb Wesson led the Scarlet and Gray with a 17-point, 13-rebound performance with the season on the line.

The Hoosiers had difficulty stopping the Westerville, Ohio, native, but did what they could to slow him down. Indiana frequently sent double teams at Kaleb Wesson and attempted to draw fouls against the Buckeye big man.

Displaying his versatile skill set, Kaleb Wesson kicked the ball out to the open man, often leading to an open basket. He contributed three assists and added more hockey assists, where his pass indirectly led to a bucket.

"It's always great when you have the ball," Kaleb Wesson said. "But just being able to find my teammates and contribute to the team was really good, I liked that."

The pressure of Indiana's defense, and perhaps a little rust, caused Kaleb Wesson to shoot 5 of 15 from the field and 1 of 4 on three-pointers. However, the 6-9 center showed composure at the line, knocking down 6-of-7 free throws.

Ohio State head coach Chris Holtmann said rust could not be used as an excuse because Kaleb Wesson went through workouts and practices while suspended.

"Credit him and Quadrian Banks, our strength coach, because had double workouts every day," Holtmann said of Kaleb Wesson. "One with Q and one with us ... So he was always going twice a day, so we felt like he would be in pretty good shape coming back."

Although he missed three games, Kaleb Wesson was able to stay connected with his teammates during his suspension, which proved to pay off.

"It was great," Kaleb Wesson said. "I feel like if I would have just took two weeks away from my team, I feel like it would have disconnect on the floor. Being able to stay with my team, practice with my team and still have that connection on the floor, we didn't miss a step."

Holtmann had said his big man's endurance would be a question mark because of the inability to simulate game speed. In his first game back, Kaleb Wesson (6-9, 270) did not appear to suffer from additional fatigue, playing 34 minutes and making plays against Indiana from start to finish.

"It means a lot," junior forward Andre Wesson said of his brother's return. "He's a big part of our offense. And even defensively, he's a big part of what we do defensively. And just to have him back was big for us."

In addition to a complete performance offensively, Kaleb Wesson contributed three blocked shots and two steals on the other end.

Holtmann said Kaleb Wesson's return impacted the Buckeyes defensively as much as it benefitted their offense.

"He's gotten better with that," Holtmann said of Kaleb's post defense. "But what I've said about him since the very first day I coached him is he's really smart defensively. He's been coached well in high school. He just sees things early, he doesn't always get there in time, but he sees things.

"And we really missed that. Think about how many shots around the rim that he affected."

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