

Men's Basketball Year In Review: Jamison Battle



Ohio State head coach Chris Holtmann dipped into the transfer portal to fill several areas of need ahead of the 2023-24 season, beginning his pursuits with the addition of Minnesota forward Jamison Battle.

Battle, a graduate transfer who began his career at George Washington before spending the last two seasons with the Golden Gophers, filled a distinct need for the Buckeyes as a power forward that could spread the floor with his three-level scoring ability. Joining Ohio State as an adept scorer, Battle has posted career averages of 14.4 points and 5.2 rebounds per game while shooting 42.0 percent from the field and 35.0 percent from deep across his four seasons at the college level.

Last season, Battle saw his scoring efficiency dip after undergoing foot surgery during the offseason, shooting career-low marks of 44.7 percent from the field and 31.1 percent from three, while his 12.4 points per game were his lowest since his freshman season at George Washington. But there were still several instances where Battle looked like his old self during the season, and Minnesota head coach Ben Johnson recognized the level of talent that Battle exudes prior to the season.

“Obviously, offensively his versatility is really good. If you play him at the four, it’s a match-up problem,” Johnson said during Big Ten Media Days on Oct. 11. “He’s developed now, into a guy that you can play on the perimeter and it’s not a disadvantage to him. The defensive part is the key. Now we can play the team bigger because we can slot Jamison at the two, or the three, or the wing. And again, I think sometimes the opponents may dictate how we utilize (Jamison) or when we feel like that advantage is there.”

After missing the first four games of the season, Battle made his season debut on Nov. 21, 2022, against California Baptist — a game the Gophers needed overtime to ward off the upset-minded Lancers 62-61. Across his first three games, Battle struggled to reintegrate himself, shooting just 26.2 percent from the field and 23.1 percent from three.

From there, Battle notched a pair of 20-point outings in losses to Purdue and Nebraska on Dec. 4, 2022, and Jan. 7, respectively, while Minnesota began its rapid slide down the Big Ten standings. Battle helped Minnesota claim its first Big Ten victory on the season by tallying 11 points on 5-of-12 shooting

to lift the Gophers past Ohio State 70-67 on Jan. 12.

After the win over Ohio State, Battle immediately hit another lull, scoring only 8 points against Illinois before shooting 0 of 9 and being held scoreless in a 61-39 loss to Purdue on Jan. 19. He found a bit of a groove after the loss to the Boilermakers, though, tallying 16.8 points and 3.8 rebounds per game while shooting 48.1 percent across the next four games, all losses for the Gophers. But again, Battle's efficiency dipped in the Gophers' next three games in which he shot 34.5 percent and averaged just 7.7 points.

While inconsistency mired Battle during the campaign, he rose above for his best outing of the season on Feb. 20, producing 31 points — the second-highest mark in his career — and six rebounds, but Minnesota still couldn't get over the hump in a 78-69 loss to Illinois, dropping to 7-18 on the season.

Three games after his scoring outburst against the Illini, Battle delivered his biggest moment in a Gopher uniform. Down 74-72 with under six seconds to play against Rutgers, guard Ta'Lon Cooper dished the ball to Battle, who used a side-step dribble move to shake his defender and drilled the game-winning three-pointer at the buzzer to give Minnesota its second conference win on March 2.

Battle's Big Ten Tournament performance served as a microcosm of his season. He tallied 13 points and eight rebounds in the Gophers' first-round 78-75 win over Nebraska. Battle followed it up with a 1-of-8 shooting performance in Minnesota's season-ending 70-54 loss to Maryland, finishing with just two points.

After the loss to Maryland, Johnson said that Battle had likely played his final game with Minnesota and would test the professional waters.

"Jamison, we've kind of known for a while. I think it goes back to the landscape of college basketball. Every kid is different and he's got an opportunity to go and become a professional," Johnson said. "That's been a goal of his and we'll support him 100% in that. He's done everything right from when he got here to put himself in a position to have an opportunity."

Battle ultimately decided to remain in college, entering the transfer portal and joining the Buckeyes on April 6. Battle's addition to the Buckeyes fills a need for a versatile power forward that can space the floor and attack closeouts. He was the first transfer portal coup by Holtmann during the cycle, and set the tone for a transfer class that also includes Baylor guard Dale Bonner and Penn State wing Evan Mahaffey.