

New-Look Ohio State Women's Hockey Team Looks To Defend Its National Title In 2024-25



180 days removed from winning its second national championship in three seasons, No. 2 Ohio State women's ice hockey has to replace production from nearly every position on the ice.

Star graduate forwards Jenn Gardiner and Hannah Bilka, who combined for 93 of the team's 531 points, are now skating with Professional Women's Hockey League Montréal and Boston, respectively. Stalwart graduate defender and Boston College transfer Cayla Barnes led all Buckeye blueliners with 36 points (11 G, 25 A) last season and also joined Gardiner in Montréal for professional play.

Also no longer with the Buckeyes is senior goaltender Raygan Kirk, the Western Collegiate Hockey Association's league-leader in goals allowed on average (1.05) and third-place honoree in save percentage (.945), who will now sit between the pipes with PWHL Toronto.

Still in Columbus, though, is national championship game hero and sophomore forward Joy Dunne, who lit the lamp at the 12:48 mark in the third period to lift Ohio State to a 1-0 win over Wisconsin. Dunne poured in 42 points (18 G, 24 A) during a season that came with massive hype for the O'Fallon, Missouri native, as she had to fill older sisters and former Buckeyes Jincy and Jessica's shoes on the ice.

Skating alongside Dunne in the middle of the top line will be graduate forward Jenna Buglioni. The center brings back 38 points and will wear the C for captain on her sweater this season after being named an assistant captain last year. Graduate forward and former Penn State transfer Kiara Zanon tallied 41 points in 2023-2024 and returns the most assists on the team with 27. Sophomore Jocelyn Amos, who quietly put together a 30-point campaign last season, will now take on a heavier offensive role this season as well.

Graduate forward and Wisconsin transfer Maddi Wheeler (24 points, 10 G, 14 A) joins the offensive skaters and becomes a member of the team that beat her in the national championship game and will look to reverse her result in last year's tilt.

Skating on the blueline for Ohio State is junior Emma Peschel (23 points), junior Clarkson transfer Sara Swiderski (10 points) and senior Minnesota transfer Emily Zumwinkle (20 career points).

Graduate goaltender Amanda Thiele (1.63 GAA, .905 save percentage) returns after splitting time with Kirk last campaign, but the Buckeyes also bring in junior Minnesota Duluth transfer Hailey MacLeod, who last saw the Buckeyes in a 9-0 Ohio State routing of the Bulldogs in the opening round of the NCAA tournament.

Incoming freshman forward Josie St. Martin will look to contribute for Ohio State this season, as will the former Shattuck St. Mary's trio of first-years Jordyn Petrie (forward), Maria Roth (defenseman) and Genny Klein (goaltender)

"That was a phenomenal team that we had (last year), but I look at it as we've just reloaded," Muzerall said on Wednesday. "We don't have as much quantity on the team, our bench is smaller, but the quality is still very good. We were just putting together our power play, and we had hard times deciding who should be where because there is a lot of offensive talent. It's going to require some coaching because we've got a couple transfers, and their style of how they played is very different from our style, being very aggressive and relentless."

Amongst a slew of returners and newcomers and a host of departers, the second-ranked Buckeyes will tilt off against No. 7 Minnesota Duluth on Saturday in a WCHA matchup to open the season. The Bulldogs said goodbye to head coach Maura Crowell in the off-season and now look to former assistant coach Laura Schuler to oversee the bench.

The Buckeyes start the season as the No. 2 team in the country for the second-straight season and will have four games in a row against WCHA squads, with the Bulldogs on Saturday and Sunday and Bemidji State in Bemidji, Minn., on Sept. 27-28.

No matchup in 2024 will likely be bigger for Ohio State than the Nov. 15 game against No. 1 Wisconsin, potentially setting up for a seventh-straight No. 1 versus No. 2 tilt between the two teams. The Buckeyes went 4-2 against the Badgers last season, including postseason play, and will look to add more bad taste in a now-storied rivalry.

A new addition to Ohio State's schedule is the Icebreaker Tournament, a potential three-game set in Columbus that opens up with Stonehill on Oct. 25 at the Schottenstein Center. The tournament also includes Cornell and Penn State.

Furthermore, the Buckeyes will play in an outdoor game at Wrigley Field in Chicago against Wisconsin on Jan. 4.

Here's Ohio State's schedule as they look to repeat as the top team in women's ice hockey:

Date	Time	H/A	Opponent	Location
Sep 21 (Sat)	3 p.m.	Home	Minnesota Duluth	Columbus, Ohio (OSU Ice Rink)
Sep 22 (Sun)	1 p.m.	Home	Minnesota Duluth	Columbus, Ohio (OSU Ice Rink)
Sep 27 (Fri)	7 p.m. (6 p.m. CT)	Away	Bemidji State	Bemidji, Minn.
Sep 28 (Sat)	4 p.m. (3 p.m. CT)	Away	Bemidji State	Bemidji, Minn.
Oct 4 (Fri)	6 p.m.	Away	St. Lawrence	Canton, N.Y.
Oct 5 (Sat)	3 p.m.	Away	St. Lawrence	Canton, N.Y.
Oct 11 (Fri)	6 p.m.	Home	Minnesota	Columbus, Ohio (OSU Ice Rink)

Oct 12 (Sat)	3 p.m.	Home	Minnesota	Columbus, Ohio (OSU Ice Rink)
Oct 18 (Fri)	7 p.m. (6 p.m. CT)	Away	St. Cloud State	St. Cloud, Minn.
Oct 19 (Sat)	2 p.m. (1 p.m. ET)	Away	St. Cloud State	St. Cloud, Minn.
Oct 22 (Tue)	6 p.m.	Home	Mercyhurst	Columbus, Ohio (OSU Ice Rink)