

No. 12 Ohio State Faces Toughest Test Of The Season With No. 2 UCLA



No. 12 Ohio State is riding a nine-game winning streak, but that's in jeopardy of coming to an end on Monday when the Buckeyes host second-ranked UCLA at The Schottenstein Center.

"They're a great team. Very talented, well coached," head coach Kevin McGuff said. "They have as good a roster as anyone in college basketball. ... It's a great opportunity. We'll need to be really good to give ourselves a chance. But the opportunity is there."

The Bruins rank fourth nationally in scoring offense at 92.7 points per game and are no slouches either on the defensive end, limiting the opposition to 60.4 points per contest. UCLA is third in the nation in field goal percentage (52.0), fourth in assists per game (22.7) and first in rebound margin (22.8), combining for an imposing offensive output that Ohio State has not seen this season.

The attack is also well-rounded, as the Bruins have six players - including a quartet of sophomores in center Lauren Betts, forward Gabriela Jaquez and guards Londynn Jones and Kiki Rice, as well as senior guard Charisma Osborne and senior forward Angela Dugalić - averaging double digits, led by Betts at 17.0 points per game. She also leads the nation in shooting percentage at 77.4 percent, and is UCLA's rebounds leader with 9.2 per contest.

But Betts is just one of five players on the roster - along with Jaquez, Osborne, Rice and Dugalić - that averaged at least six rebounds per game, assisting the Bruins to average 48.9 boards per game, with 17 per contest coming on the offensive end.

"I know they're a really athletic group," Ohio State guard Jacy Sheldon said. "I know they have some size, so we're looking forward to it."

Given UCLA's shooting acumen, the Buckeyes will be looking to limit the Bruins' offensive possessions - a potential advantage for Ohio State given it is eighth in the nation in turnover margin (plus 8.8 per

game) and UCLA turns it over 16 times per game - while capitalizing on a strong run of performances from Sheldon and fifth-year guard Celeste Taylor.

Sheldon leads the Buckeyes with 16.8 points per game this season and is coming off a 7-of-8 shooting performance against Grand Valley State, her best ever percentage in five seasons. Taylor, meanwhile, has scored in double digits in two of the last four games, including a 13-point, 11-rebound double-double against Penn State on Dec. 10.

"We're excited. It's a good opportunity for us," Sheldon said. "They're really good team and we're really good team, so it's a good matchup for us. Anytime you're put up against the number two in the country, you look forward to it. That's a good matchup. We're excited."

Ohio State and UCLA tips off at 6:30 p.m., and will be broadcast nationally on FS1.