

Ohio State Emphasized Rest and Recovery Before Battle With Penn State



Ohio State will begin its postseason with a second-round matchup with Penn State. The No. 6-seed Buckeyes will take on No. 11 Nittany Lions on Thursday, but they could be without some of their reliable contributors.

Head coach Chris Holtmann told reporters Wednesday that forward Kyle Young will miss the Penn State game after suffering a concussion against Nebraska on March 2. He also mentioned that forward Zed Key would be a game-time decision as he recovers from an ankle injury.

“Kyle will be out for Thursday’s game,” Ohio State head coach Chris Holtmann said on Wednesday. “That’s all I can tell you. I’m not sure what it will be beyond that. We will know more about Zed after we have a chance to have him evaluated.”

Holtmann said guard Meechie Johnson Jr. would suit up for the Buckeyes after leaving Sunday’s loss to Michigan with a tweaked ankle. Forward Justice Sueing, who has not played since November due to an abdominal ailment, will not be available. Holtmann announced earlier this season that Seth Towns suffered a setback in his back rehabilitation and will miss all of 2021-22.

The fifth-year head coach admitted that Ohio State’s loaded schedule in the final stretch likely caused an increase in names of the status report. The Buckeyes played eight games in the last 20 days of the regular season — a string that included losses to Maryland, Nebraska and Michigan.

Holtmann said his team has been correcting the errors that became prevalent in those three losses. However, with players absent from practice, that proves a much more difficult challenge than it appears.

“We have certainly been trying to (improve), but we’ve had some guys out of practice,” he said. “That’s impacted things. We certainly were looking at addressing some things and did that some yesterday.”

Ohio State has used its unfamiliar rest days to rest and recover between Sunday afternoon’s contest with Michigan and Thursday night’s second-round game against Penn State.

“We did give them Monday off,” Holtmann said. “Our guys may have been fatigued in some of these

games. Certainly, it was an unprecedented string of games. The only game where I thought it was a significant factor was at Maryland. I thought we just really lacked a lot of juice there. Perhaps it was evident. I just didn't maybe notice it as much as our staff did."

On Wednesday, Penn State advanced to the second round after a 60-51 win over Minnesota. Jalen Pickett's 22 points, seven rebounds and four assists led the Nittany Lions to the nine-point victory. Sam Sessoms added 14 points and Seth Lundy contributed 11.

Ohio State swept Penn State in the regular season, including a 76-64 win on Dec. 5 at the Bryce Jordan Center and a 61-56 victory at Value City Arena on Jan. 16.

Young led the Buckeyes with 16 points in the first meeting, while E.J. Liddell and Malaki Branham added 14 and 11 points, respectively. Pickett paced the Nittany Lions with 23 points. When the teams met a month later, Liddell scored 19 and added eight rebounds, while Sessoms dropped 19.

"In the second game, it was a one- or two-possession game in the last two minutes here," Holtmann said. "Playing teams for the third time that are obviously good, well-coached teams, it will be a challenge in this first game for sure.

"Penn State has played in a lot of really close games. They can really make it difficult for you because they've got a couple of guys who can individually go off and get between 20 and 30 points."

There's an adage that says, "It's hard to beat a team three times," which could prove true for Ohio State here. Without Young in the lineup, the Buckeyes will need quality contributions from each player against Penn State — perhaps more if Key cannot suit up.

Ohio State and Penn State will tip-off at 9 p.m. Thursday (at the earliest) from Gainbridge Fieldhouse in Indianapolis. The game will be broadcast live on The Big ten Network.