

# Ohio State Head Coach Jake Diebler Remains Confident In Backcourt Depth After Taison Chatman Injury



Ohio State suffered a significant loss to its backcourt depth this week when sophomore guard Taison Chatman went down with a season-ending ACL tear that required surgery. While losing Chatman — who was expected to see a minutes increase this upcoming season after 17 points, eight rebounds and five assists in 17 games as a freshman — could propel Ohio State to dip into the transfer portal to fill their final roster spot with another guard, Buckeyes head coach Jake Diebler said on Thursday that he still feels he has enough backcourt depth currently on his roster to perform at a high-level in 2024-25.

“Going into the season, (we) felt like depth was a real strength for us at the guard position,” Diebler told a group of local reporters at the Value City Arena interview room Thursday. “And Taison had shown signs of being able to take a jump. I still think depth is a strength for us. I don’t think it changes that. How great that depth is certainly has been impacted. And we’re in the process of kind of evaluating what that means from a — is there any other additions that we need to make there?”

“But listen, I feel really good about who we have. I don’t think it impacts the overall depth of this team. It impacts it a little bit, certainly, but not from the standpoint of like, ‘Hey, this isn’t something we can recover from.’ ”

Regardless of Chatman’s injury, Ohio State’s backcourt is still led by the skilled tandem of Bruce Thornton and Meechie Johnson, who on Thursday proclaimed that he feels he and Thornton should be the “one of the best backcourts in the country” next season. While Thornton and Johnson could become a formidable duo on the perimeter in 2024-25, Diebler said his team has many other players who can step up and perform ball-handling duties.

He cited returning players such as Evan Mahaffey and Devin Royal along with newcomers Micah Parrish, Juni Mobley and Colin White as Buckeyes who could all emerge in Chatman’s absence, which he thinks could help his team play with a more fast-paced style on offense.

“I think I’ve been pretty open about this. I want to play more ball handlers and I think that’ll help us play faster,” Diebler said. “Evan can certainly do some of that. We’ve had really big plans for Micah

from the moment we started recruiting him. So this doesn't impact those plans. They were made from the beginning.

"I do think it creates some more opportunities for guys like Juni — add Colin White to that list — of, it could open up some opportunities. And then with Evan and Devin, and I've told them this, I've challenged them with expanding their game this offseason to being able to do some more of those things on the perimeter. So I guess (handling the ball) by committee, yeah, it'll be part of it. But I'm not concerned about it. Some guys are going to have to step up a little bit more."

Despite expressing confidence in the players currently on his roster, Diebler did not rule out searching the transfer portal to add one final guard for the season. With many of the high-profile transfers already finding new homes this spring, however, he also indicated that he and his staff will be deliberate with this decision-making process, and will keep all their options open.

"I think we're looking at all options," Diebler said. "And one of them is sitting tight too. We're evaluating that. One thing I don't want to do (is) we have a really good thing going right now, I don't want to rush into something. But we're evaluating that, certainly."