

Ohio State Interested In Trio Of Basketball Transfers



Ohio State has expressed interest in a trio of players in the transfer portal as it prepares for an offseason that will see at least seven Buckeyes depart. The Buckeyes were among those calling for Princeton's Jaelin Llewellyn, North Dakota State's Sam Griesel and Lafayette's Neal Quinn, according to reports from Jake Weingarten, Sean Paul and George Michalowski. Ohio State is expected to lose forward Justin Ahrens, center Joey Brunk, forward E.J. Liddell, guard Cedric Russell, guard Jimmy Sotos, forward Kyle Young and guard Jamari Wheeler, and could be losing star freshman guard Malaki Branham, depending on the whims of the NBA draft cycle.

In Llewellyn, Ohio State would be getting a scoring threat in the backcourt, ala Russell or, on the upper end, Duane Washington Jr. He averaged 15.7 points per game on 44.7 percent shooting (38.6 percent from 3-point range) in 2021, with 2.5 assists and 4.1 rebounds on top of that. With 1.8 turnovers per contest, though, Llewellyn's best fit would be as more of an off-ball scorer, not as a primary ball-handler - which Ohio State will need with Wheeler departing unless Meechie Johnson Jr. is in for a big leap.

The Buckeyes are joined in this recruitment Alabama, Arkansas, Butler, Cal, Cincinnati, DePaul, Georgetown, Iowa State, Memphis, Miami, Minnesota, Oklahoma, Oklahoma State, Ole Miss, Santa Clara, Seton Hall, Stanford, St. John's, SMU, UNLV, Vanderbilt and West Virginia. His -2.3 defensive box plus-minus would be the worst among all Ohio State contributors this season, but his 2.4 offensive box plus-minus would slot him in slightly ahead of Cedric Russell. Princeton was 23-7 this past season but fell to Yale in the Ivy League finals, losing out on the league's NCAA bid.

Griesel is closer to a wing guard, checking in at 6-6, 215 pounds. The easiest comparison in style on this current Ohio State roster would be someone like Cal transfer Justice Sueing - a capable wing scorer who can add value on defense and as a rebounder. Griesel took a major step in the scoring department this season, averaging a career-high 14.3 points per contest on 48.2 percent shooting from the field. He only takes about two 3-pointers a game, but shot 37.9 percent in that department.

He's proven competent as a wing playmaker and rebounder too, adding 3.4 assists and 6.6 rebounds per game for the 23-10 Bison, which finished as runners-up in the Summit League to South Dakota State. This past season was easily his most effective with NDSU, putting up a 2.5 OBPM, a 0.8 DBPM and an 18.1 percent defensive rebounding rate. That would slot him in at fourth among serious contributors, slightly ahead of Zed Key (2.1) in OBPM, fourth in DBPM behind Young (1.2) but ahead of Eugene Brown III and Key (0.4) and fourth in DR% behind Key (19.6), Liddell (19.0) and Young (18.4) but well ahead of anyone else within the top eight for minutes played.

Ohio State is battling with Cal Baptist, Colorado State, Creighton, Drake, Fort Wayne, Indiana St, Loyola Chicago, Nebraska, Northern Iowa, Northwestern, Penn State, Santa Clara and Stanford for his interest.

Lastly, Quinn offers a potential big man for the Buckeyes, who will be without Brunk, Liddell and Young and will need to find extra players to complement Key, with redshirt freshman Kalen Etzler and freshman Felix Okpara as the only big men projected for next season's roster. The 7-0, 280-pound center played nearly 30 minutes per game for the 10-20 Leopards this season averaging 14.7 points, 7.4 rebounds and 1.4 blocks per contest while staying under 2.0 personal fouls per game.

His advanced stat profile is a mixed bag. His 3.9 OBPM would slot him as one of Ohio State's most effective offensive players from the jump, behind only Liddell (8.1), Young (4.7) and Branham (4.5), but his 0.4 DBPM leaves much to be desired, especially if he were to enter the big man-heavy Big Ten. His 19.5 defensive rebounding percentage would also be among the team's best, but his stat profile projects roughly to a more offensively effective version of Key, or Brunk with a higher usage rate.

He recently visited Rutgers and has interest from Butler, Georgia Tech, Illinois, Loyola Chicago, NC State, Richmond, Seton Hall. He named the Scarlet Knights, Loyola Chicago and Richmond as the teams that have most grabbed his interest, saying that he wants a school with a "focus on big man development, strength and conditioning, (a) style of play I can work well in and a place where I'm gonna play significant minutes," according to an interview with 247Sports.

Ohio State's focus has yet to shift significantly into teambuilding for 2022-23, and won't until its current season comes to a close. The Buckeyes have Loyola Chicago on the slate for the first round of the NCAA Tournament on March 18 at 12:15 p.m.