

Ohio State Looking To Take Intensity From Practice Into NCAA Tournament



Following back-to-back losses against Iowa and Maryland in recent weeks, the last week of practice has not been a pleasant one for Ohio State. It was a time for the team to focus on fundamentals as the second-seeded Buckeyes prepare to take on No. 15 Maine at The Schottenstein Center on Friday.

“We had a great week of practice,” guard Jacy Sheldon said. “Probably one of the most competitive weeks we’ve had this year. ... Coming back from that, learning from that game, and then just focusing on Maine and how they play and their style of play and preparing for them, I think it was a good past week and a half for us, and we’re finally excited to play.”

It was an intentional shift in intensity from the coaching staff that was looking to reenergize the team, and bring it closer to the team that won 14 consecutive games earlier this season rather than the one entering the NCAA Tournament with consecutive losses, the only time this season the Buckeyes lost back-to-back contests.

“I think just we were so dreadful vs. Maryland that I just wanted to remind them that this is kind of who we are and what makes us good, and just the intensity, the focus, the passion that we play with,” head coach Kevin McGuff said. “And they responded. They did. They know the things that make us good. But just wanted to make sure that when we have a chance to play another game, which will be tomorrow, that we’re focused and we’re ready to go.”

Senior guard Rikki Harris said that while practices have since returned to more normalcy, the same cannot be said of the intensity from the coaching staff. While it has been an arduous stretch, it’s one the team believes has helped them move past those losses and be in position for a strong run in the NCAA Tournament.

“It was physically tough, mentally tough, emotionally tough. But it did make us stronger,” she said. “The team, we came together well. I don’t want to say it was us against the coaches, but, I mean, the coaches were pushing us hard, so we had each other to lean on. That last week set the tone for what’s to come.”