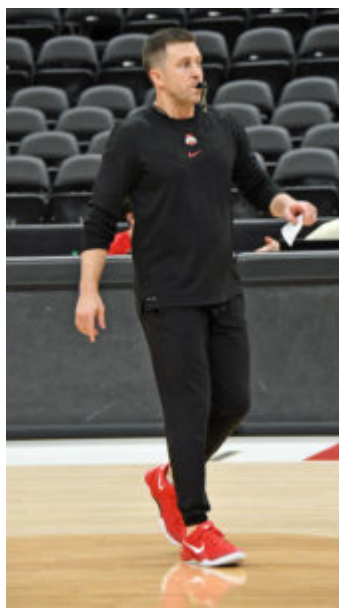


Ohio State Projected To Finish Eighth In Big Ten In Unofficial Media Poll



Ohio State is projected to finish above the mean in the Big Ten standings in Jake Diebler's first year leading the team.

In the eighth annual unofficial Big Ten media poll conducted jointly by The Columbus Dispatch and Indianapolis Star and released on Wednesday, the Buckeyes were picked to finish eighth in the new-look 18-team conference, just one spot ahead of rival Michigan at No. 9.

Out of the 33 media members who placed a vote — a group that included at least one that covers each of the 18 teams — one picked Ohio State to finish in first place, coming from The Des Moines Register's Tyler Tachman, who covers Iowa.

Purdue, who has taken the last two Big Ten regular season championships and is coming off a National Championship Game appearance, received 20 of the 33 first-place votes to take the top spot. The Boilermakers will be playing this season without two-time Naismith Player of the Year center Zach Edey, who is now with the NBA's Memphis Grizzlies, but voters believe Matt Painter's team has another star in the making in guard Braden Smith, who earned 27 of 33 votes for Big Ten Player of the Year.

The Boilermakers and Buckeyes were two of six Big Ten teams to receive first-place votes. Indiana, who is led by fourth-year head coach Mike Woodson and Arizona transfer center Oumar Ballo, earned seven first-place votes to be ranked No. 2, while Big Ten newcomer UCLA was No. 3 with two votes, Illinois was No. 4 with two votes and Michigan State ranked No. 5 with one vote.

Ranked just ahead of Ohio State were No. 6 Oregon and No. 7 Rutgers, while Michigan, No. 10 Maryland, No. 11 Iowa, T-No. 12 Wisconsin, T-No. 12 Nebraska, No. 14 USC, No. 15 Washington, No. 16 Northwestern, No. 17 Penn State and No. 18 Minnesota followed the Buckeyes.

The Big Ten media voted on some other individual awards other than Player of the Year, selecting

former five-star Rutgers guard Dylan Harper as Freshman of the Year and Ballo as Transfer of the Year.

Junior Ohio State guard Bruce Thornton was also selected to the poll's All Big-Ten first team receiving 37 votes. He joins a list that includes Smith (64 votes), Iowa's Payton Sandfort (48), Ballo (47) and Harper (32). Thornton is also one of 10 players selected to All-Big Ten in the official media poll.

Ohio State will begin Big Ten play on Dec. 4 when it travels to College Park, Md., to take on the Terrapins, the first of 20 conference games on the schedule.