

Ohio State Reportedly Targeting Jake Diebler As Full-Time Head Coach



According to multiple reports, Ohio State is targeting Jake Diebler as its full-time head men's basketball coach.

BREAKING: Ohio State is targeting Jake Diebler for the permanent job, source told @TheFieldOf68.

Diebler took over and did a terrific job, leading the Buckeyes to a 6-2 record after taking over following the departure of Chris Holtmann.

— Jeff Goodman (@GoodmanHoops) March 17, 2024

Diebler, 37, had instant success in the head coaching chair after being promoted from associate to interim head coach by Ohio State athletic director Gene Smith on Feb. 14 in the wake of Chris Holtmann's dismissal.

Taking over a reeling program that then had a 14-11 record and losing stretch of nine Big Ten losses in the last 11 games, he led the Buckeyes to a 5-1 record in the final six games of the regular season, a season-altering stretch that included an upset win over No. 2 Purdue in Diebler's first game as acting head coach, a come-from-behind road win at Michigan State that ended the program's 17-game road losing streak, and a 23-point rivalry win over Michigan on Senior Day.

That successful stretch allowed the Buckeyes to go from 14th to 10th place in the Big Ten standings and secure an unlikely first-round bye in the Big Ten Tournament, where they won their second-round game

against Iowa before eventually falling to No. 13 Illinois in the quarterfinals on Friday night.

Diebler's efforts to bring the Buckeyes back into the NCAA Tournament conversation impressed many within the world of college basketball, including his own players, who consistently raved about the interim head coach's ability to navigate his team in the midst of a difficult mid-season coaching change.

"I know it was very difficult to be put in this situation as a head coach out of the womb," sophomore guard Bruce Thornton said after the Illinois loss on Friday night. "I knew it was always his dream and desire to be a head coach — he probably thought it would never be this soon — but he had the opportunity in front of him and he took full advantage of it."

If promoted to head coach, Diebler would be tasked with leading an Ohio State program that is looking to return to Big Ten and national prominence, with the Buckeyes last making the NCAA Tournament in the 2021-22 season and last appearing in a Final Four in 2012. This is something that incoming athletic director Ross Bjork identified as the standard for the men's basketball program moving forward.

"It's a great opportunity, and we should be competing at the highest level within the Big Ten," Bjork told the Columbus Dispatch in February. "If you're doing that, that means you're a national program and that means you can make a run into March and the Final Four and eventually win it. That's the goal in all of this."

The move would also make the 37-year-old Diebler the youngest coach in the Big Ten.

When asked about the possibility of him being elevated to head coach after the Illinois loss Friday night, Diebler said he did not have time to think about his future during the season and is instead focused on how he can best lead the program through a potential postseason run.

"As far as what's next, I don't think there's been appropriate time to think through that because the focus has been on the here and now," Diebler said. "There will be a time for that. That time's not now. Appreciate the question, but going to keep my focus on these guys."

Regardless, Diebler's reported promotion would mark a rapid ascension for the former Valparaiso guard who has spent eight of his 14 coaching seasons at Ohio State. Diebler, who's first job out of college was a student assistant position at Valparaiso in 2010, first joined the Buckeyes' program as a video coordinator under former head coach Thad Matta from 2014-16.

After leaving the program to spend three seasons at Vanderbilt, Diebler returned to Columbus in 2019 as an assistant on Holtmann's staff, only to be elevated to associate head coach in 2022-23, then as interim head coach in 2024.

Buckeye Sports Bulletin will have more on this breaking news story as news unfolds.