

Ohio State Represented On Early Top 25 Predictions



Although Ohio State endured one of its worst seasons in recent memory in 2022-23, with the Buckeyes plummeting to a 16-19 record, including a 5-15 mark in Big Ten play, hopes are high that OSU can turn it around in 2023-24.

Down the stretch of last season, Ohio State showed its true potential by winning five of its last seven games and making an unexpected run to the semifinals of the Big Ten Tournament. The Buckeyes were largely led by their freshmen contributors during the run, with guards Bruce Thornton and Roddy Gayle Jr. and center Felix Okpara all playing key roles in the conference tournament. Although Ohio State will likely lose the services of leading scorer and freshman forward Brice Sensabaugh to the NBA Draft, expectations are, once again, rising in Columbus for a bounce-back season.

With the Buckeyes adding another Top 10 recruiting class in 2023, as well as a solid transfer haul that includes Minnesota forward Jamison Battle, Baylor guard Dale Bonner and Penn State wing Evan Mahaffey, Ohio State has popped up on several early Top 25 predictions with the regular season still months away.

In the immediate aftermath of the NCAA Tournament, The Athletic's Seth Davis tabbed Ohio State as the No. 22 overall team entering the offseason. Davis' prediction came before Ohio State landed any of its transfer targets, however, he expressed immense faith in the Buckeyes' rising sophomore class as well as the incoming freshmen.

"Thornton has the potential to be a first-team All-Big Ten point guard. Gayle played behind (shooting guard Sean McNeil) but did great after he was put into the starting lineup," Davis wrote. "The freshman class includes three players ranked in the top 50 nationally in the 247Sports Composite. (St. Marys Memorial three-star center Austin Parks) in particular, has a ready-made Big Ten body, and his presence inside should allow (forward Zed Key) and Okpara to play with more space and freedom."

Like Davis, 247Sports' Kevin Flaherty compiled his list at the immediate conclusion of the NCAA Tournament, and while Ohio State didn't appear among the Top 25, Flaherty included the Buckeyes in his "15 More To Watch" list while noting that "a bounce-back season could be in the cards for Chris Holtmann's crew."

The Score's Matthew Winick, who compiled his rankings after the Buckeyes garnered the commitment of Battle, ranked Ohio State at No. 18, notably above No. 20 Florida Atlantic — which is coming off of its first Final Four appearance — and No. 21 San Diego State, who appeared in the NCAA National Championship in 2022-23.

"It was a surprising down year for Chris Holtmann and Ohio State last season, but momentum from a Big Ten tournament run should carry over," Winick wrote. "Rising sophomores Bruce Thornton and Roddy Gayle, along with big man Zed Key, should be the team's go-to guys, a really solid recruiting class will serve as important depth, and Minnesota transfer Jamison Battle will provide veteran leadership."

CBS Sports' Gary Parrish and ESPN's Jeff Borzello each updated their preseason rankings after former Michigan center Hunter Dickinson transferred to Kansas on Thursday, but Ohio State did not appear on either list.