

Ohio State Set For Massive Matchup With Caitlin Clark, Top-Ranked Iowa



No. 18 Ohio State will play arguably its biggest game of the regular season on Sunday, set to host star guard Caitlin Clark and No. 2 Iowa at Value City Arena in front of an expected sellout crowd.

The Buckeyes announced Friday that the game is sold out, with 18,660 fans expected, which would be the most to ever attend a women's basketball game at Ohio State.

"We're going to have an incredible crowd," Ohio State head coach Kevin McGuff said. "It's a great event for women's basketball, and certainly this community who really supports women's sports."

With an expected record crowd, the pressure will be on for the Buckeyes. Iowa has been among the best teams in the country over the last few years, led by the transcendent Clark, who is averaging 31.0 points, 7.2 rebounds and 7.7 assists on 48.1 percent shooting and 40.1 percent shooting from deep.

Clark has particularly been a thorn in the side of the Buckeyes. In five career games against Ohio State - four in the regular season and one in the Big Ten Women's Basketball Tournament - she has averaged 31.6 points, 10.6 assists and 7.6 rebounds, including three triple-doubles and a 43-point outing.

But outside of defending Clark, which is no easy task in the first place, the Hawkeyes also have guard Kate Martin and forward Hannah Stuelke averaging double figures, and the Hawkeyes as a whole average 90.8 points per game - third in the country - and are in the top 25 nationally in all categories of shooting.

"(Clark is) an incredible player, always has been, but she's gotten better each year," McGuff said. "I think where she's impacted their program the most is just last year and then especially this year, she's making everybody around her better. I think early on, it was kind of, people focused on how much she was scoring, but to me, it's really about - she's going to score, but it's really about how well she makes everybody around her better."

Ohio State has seemingly rounded into form at the right time ahead of this significant matchup, winning their last four contests - including a road win at Maryland for the first time since 2016 - and seeing significant contributions from both the team's starters and off the bench.

Guards Jacy Sheldon and Taylor Thierry have continued to lead the Buckeyes, but a resurgent performance as of late from sophomore forward Cotie McMahon as well as the continued improvement of fifth-year guard Celeste Taylor in her first season with Ohio State have the Buckeyes hopeful they can end a two-game losing streak against the Hawkeyes.

"I think we've gotten better lately. I don't think we would have beaten Maryland three weeks ago," McGuff said. "I think we're getting better, especially on the road. We're getting better. We still have a ways to go. I'm just hopeful that we can peak at the right time, and I think we're heading in that direction."

Ohio State and Iowa will tip off at noon on Sunday, and will be broadcast nationally on NBC.