

Ohio State Still Projected To Make NCAA Tournament Despite Blowout Loss To Northwestern



Despite suffering one of its more lopsided conference losses in recent memory on Thursday night, falling 70-49 to 13-13 Northwestern at home, the Buckeyes are still on pace to earn a berth to the NCAA tournament for the first time since 2021-22.

According to [bracketmatrix.com](https://www.bracketmatrix.com), which tracks nearly 100 different projected NCAA tournament brackets, Ohio State averages out as a No. 10 seed in the 68-team field, one seed lower than it was heading into the Northwestern game.

The Buckeyes, who currently hold a 15-12 record and 7-9 conference mark with four regular season games left to play, are the top-rated 10-seed per the site, just below bubble teams West Virginia (16-10, 7-8 Big 12), Texas (16-10, 5-8 SEC) — which Ohio State beat to open the season in Las Vegas — and BYU (18-8, 8-5 Big 12).

Each of the 100+ brackets featured have the Buckeyes in the Big Dance, with the seeds ranging from No. 8 to No. 11. The majority of the projected brackets have the Buckeyes as either a No. 10 or No. 9 seed, meaning they would narrowly avoid a trip to the First Four in Dayton and play either a No. 7 seed or No. 8 seed in the first round, followed by a No. 2 or No. 1 seed if they advance.

Among those who have the Buckeyes in that range is ESPN. Longtime ESPN “Bracketologist” Joe Lunardi still has Ohio State as a No. 10 seed in the Big Dance, playing in the Midwest region against No. 7 seed Kansas in the first round, followed by a matchup against either No. 2 seed Wisconsin and No. 15 Norfolk State in the Round of 32.

However, there are some other publications who have the Buckeyes fighting for their NCAA tournament lives and squarely on the bubble. Those include USA Today, which in their latest projected bracket released on Feb. 21 has Ohio State as a No. 11 seed, just narrowly missing the First Four round and playing No. 6 seed Louisville in Wichita, Kan.

Despite sitting just three games over .500 and two games under .500 in Big Ten play, Ohio State is still a consensus pick to make the NCAA tournament in large part due to its several quality wins.

According to the NET rankings — an algorithm used by the NCAA Tournament Selection Committee that is set up to reward teams who have quality wins — the Buckeyes hold a No. 32 ranking with five Quad 1 wins.

Quad 1 wins include home games against teams ranked within the top 30 of the NET, neutral site games against teams within the top 50, and away games against teams within the top 75.

Ohio State's five Quad 1 victories include a home victory against Maryland (No. 11 in NET) on Feb. 6, neutral site wins over Kentucky (No. 14) on Dec. 21 and Texas (No. 35) on Nov. 4 and road wins at Purdue (15) on Jan. 21 and Penn State (No. 74) on Jan. 30.

Another aspect helping the Buckeyes is that Northwestern is rated favorably in the NET, sitting at No. 51 following its Quad 1 victory at Value City Arena. This makes the loss — albeit a 21-point defeat — only a Quad 2 loss. The Buckeyes have a 2-4 record in Quad 2 games, a 2-0 mark in Quad 3 games and 6-0 record in Quad 4 games.

Ohio State has plenty of opportunities to further boost its NCAA tournament résumé and get off the bubble with three more Quad 1-win opportunities during the regular season, starting on Sunday in Los Angeles against No. 28 UCLA (3:45 p.m., CBS).

The Buckeyes' road games against No. 67 USC next Wednesday (10:30 p.m., BTN) and No. 58 Indiana (3:45, CBS) are also Quad 1 games.