

Taiyier Parks Offers Significant Boost For Ohio State's Play In The Post



Ohio State's offense last year was among the best in the country, averaging 80.1 points per game and shooting - as a team - 46.1 percent from the field, both numbers that ranked in the top 20 nationally.

But, it was evident as the Buckeyes worked through their schedule that their offense would not be able to lead the way in every game. Ohio State's defense saw continued improvement throughout the season, turning opponents over 20.1 times per game and making significant plays on the defensive end in wins over Michigan, North Carolina and UConn near the end of the season.

Even so, deficiencies still existed on the defensive end, specifically when it came to defending in the post. In Ohio State's season-ending loss to Virginia Tech, 6-6 center Elizabeth Kitley dominated, finishing with 25 points and 12 rebounds on 9-of-14 shooting and adding three blocks while not leaving the floor for the entire game.

Those types of post players had also hindered Ohio State earlier in the season - Indiana's Mackenzie Holmes averaged 23.7 points and 5.3 rebounds on 76.3 percent shooting in three games against the Buckeyes, while Iowa's Monika Czinano averaged 24.0 points and 5.5 rebounds on 88.0 percent shooting in two games against Ohio State.

But the Buckeyes' most recent transfer addition - former Michigan State forward Taiyier Parks, a 6-3 native of Cleveland who committed to Ohio State on Thursday - could help to spell those issues moving forward for head coach Kevin McGuff.

She averaged just 18.5 minutes per game last season for the Spartans but made the most of her time, scoring 8.3 points and adding 5.2 rebounds per game (2.6 each on the offensive and defensive boards) on 57.5 percent shooting, which led Michigan State. She added 11 blocks and 34 steals (1.2 per game) as well, though she shot just 56.0 percent (42 of 75) from the free-throw line.

She has attempted just one three-pointer in her four seasons at Michigan State, meaning she plays more like a traditional post, one that Ohio State has not had since the recently-drafted Dorka Juhasz was on campus in Columbus. Having someone on the roster that can hound the paint has been a sorely missed aspect on the Buckeyes' roster as of late, but Parks should be able to fill that role with ease.

Parks' rebounding puts her above the rest, with her 152 rebounds last season split evenly among on the offensive and defensive boards. Furthermore, she had an offensive rebounding rate of 14.3 percent, according to Her Hoop Stats, which puts her in the 98th percentile, meaning she is already among the best rebounders on Ohio State's squad.

As for her defense - an area where Ohio State doesn't want any of the starting five to fall behind, as a weak link makes for a weak defensive press - Parks averaged 2.5 steals per 40 minutes and posted a defensive player rating of 86.0 last season, according to Her Hoop Stats, which puts her in the 84th percentile.

Parks will compete for playing time along with returning forwards Rebeka Mikulasikova and Eboni Walker, the latter of which started the final 11 games of the season for Ohio State, but Parks' height and proven ability as an effective player in the post gives her a leg up as a potential starter for next season.

A starting lineup of guards Jacy Sheldon, Celeste Taylor and Taylor Thierry with forwards Cotie McMahon and Parks offers a much more traditional lineup than recent small-ball lineups the Buckeyes have used in recent seasons, and it gives Ohio State more of a fighting chance deeper in the season when those deficiencies in the post have spelled trouble for the Buckeyes.