

Taylor's Addition Offers Boost To Already Improving Defense For Ohio State



It isn't often that a reigning Defensive Player of the Year from a major conference hits the transfer portal, but when they do, there are no shortage of programs that would be happy to take them.

In the case of former Duke guard Celeste Taylor, the defending ACC Defensive Player of the Year, it was Ohio State that won out for her services, earning her commitment on Thursday for her final season of collegiate eligibility.

Hey Buckeye Nation ♥️ pic.twitter.com/ov4XGuKs48

— Celeste Taylor (@_celeste620) April 20, 2023

Ohio State's is still months away from taking the court for preseason practice, let alone the actual season beginning, but it isn't difficult to see where Taylor might slot in for the Buckeyes, and why the staff saw her as a natural fit for what head coach Kevin McGuff has been building.

Taylor's reputation as an elite defender precedes her. Beyond winning ACC Defensive Player of the Year this past season, she was also named first-team All-ACC and to the ACC All-Defensive Team, and she was finalist for the Naismith Women's Defensive Player of the Year. In addition to averaging 11.4 points and 4.8 rebounds per game last season, she also stole the ball away 2.2 times per game.

That should make for a menacing duo in the backcourt along with fifth-year guard Jacy Sheldon, who will also be playing her final season of basketball in Columbus. Sheldon averaged 3.5 steals in limited action last season due to injury, but prior to her missing extended time, she averaged 6.0 steals per

game through her first five games of the season.

Furthermore, Madison Greene will return for the Buckeyes after suffering her second season-ending knee injuries in as many year. Greene averaged 3.0 steals per game last season prior to her injury, so if she is able to return to that level, Ohio State's backcourt could feature nearly nine steals worth of production per game. When factoring in the Buckeyes' other consistent stealers, including guard Taylor Thierry's 2.1 steals per game, opponents will have a hard time holding on to the ball against Ohio State.

Playing aggressive defensive is no stranger to Taylor, whose Blue Devils held opponents to just 51.0 points per game last season, the best mark in the country. Her steals were part of a defense that took the ball away from opponents 8.9 times per game and on 11.5 percent of their possessions, according to Her Hoop Stats. Taylor's fit on the defensive end makes sense for a team that consistently pressures opponents and looks to force turnovers.

On the offensive end, she'll help to replace the production of Taylor Mikesell at shooting guard, which is no small task considering Mikesell's team-leading 17.2 points per game last season. Taylor's 39.2 percent shooting from the floor and 32.5 percent shooting from deep in her last two seasons at Duke is not what Ohio State has been accustomed to from Mikesell and Sheldon over the last two seasons, but her defensive acumen is something that the Buckeyes can use to further boost a rising defense. Plus, an additional year in the program for forward Cotie McMahon will likely see her scoring capability expand even further, taking additional pressure off Ohio State's guards.

For a team that made it all the way to the Elite Eight last season, Taylor's addition makes it that much more likely that Ohio State can return to that stage next season, if not look to move on further.