

Transfers Celeste Taylor, Taiyier Parks See Championship Potential At Ohio State



Ohio State welcomed in three transfers this offseason — forward Taiyier Parks from Michigan State and guards Celeste Taylor from Duke and Kennedy Cambridge from Kentucky — and despite only being on campus for a few months, the expectations have been made clear.

“I don’t necessarily think it’s been stated. I think you can tell by when you walk in the gym, just the atmosphere,” Taylor said in July. “It feels like a national championship team once you step on the court, once you step in the locker room. Everybody around you is just...you could tell how motivated everybody is. When they play, when they speak basketball in general. I mean, there’s days where we get on top of each other. Me and Tai are new and we’re still the ones that are getting after each other and everybody’s taking it. And you can tell that they want to win, they want to win every game possible.

“So I mean, it hasn’t been stated. You guys will see when you see us play on the court that that’s our goal. One of our goals.”

Taylor has experienced team and individual success over her career, making it to the Elite Eight at Texas before transferring to Duke, where she won last season’s ACC Defensive Player of the Year award and earned first-team All-ACC honors. That defensive acumen — something that has been a major focus for Ohio State over the last few seasons, with players that don’t play defense rarely seeing the court — already has her fitting right in with the Buckeyes.

“I think I’m just a hard-nosed (player), very big on working hard and work ethic and just doing whatever it is that my team needs me to do. I’m capable of scoring, I know that, but I don’t have to score in order to make an impact on the game,” Taylor said. “And so I know that personally, I’m the person that’s diving in the crowd for loose balls, the person that’s diving on the floor, taking charges. Honestly, just a hustle player.”

Joining a team like Ohio State that is coming off the program’s first Elite Eight appearance since 1994,

Taylor is hoping to help the Buckeyes to take their success even further.

“I guess for me, just being a super senior and just being able to help that and push. ... I’ve gotten to that point too, and there’s so much more work that needs to be done after that fact,” she said. “And so just constantly telling the young girls, because there are a lot of young girls on the team still - there are a lot of older ones, too - just to keep pushing it. You guys made it that far, they did that. Kudos to them, it was great. It was a great run, I loved watching it.

“But just to be a part of it and help in any way that I can, honestly, I’m willing to do whatever it is, because once again, I know what it feels like to get there. And I want to get further than that as well.”

Parks — who said she brings a “physicality” to the team — echoed Taylor’s comments and said the team is hoping to make a Final Four run, and she sees the pieces in place.

“The energy and the vibe is there,” she said. “This place gives off (a great) energy. It’s a standard and an expectation, and we’re just happy that we have the opportunity to be in this. I just feel like it’s going to be good for us.”