

Women's Basketball Year In Review: Taylor Thierry



Amid freshman forward Cotie McMahon's breakout, injuries to Madison Greene and Jacy Sheldon as well as the continued sharpshooting of Taylor Mikesell, guard Taylor Thierry seemed to get lost in the fold at times last season for Ohio State.

And it's a shame, because it was a spectacular season for the sophomore from Cleveland. She averaged 13.5 points, 6.5 rebounds and 2.3 assists per game on 62.5 percent shooting, a mark which ranked seventh nationally last season and third in the Big Ten behind Iowa forward Monika Czinano (67.4 percent) and Indiana forward Mackenzie Holmes (68.0 percent).

While Thierry did not necessarily create the highlights that some of her teammates did, she was one of the most consistent members of the team that reached the Elite Eight for the first time since 1993. She was one of only three players (along with McMahon and Mikesell) to appear in and start every game for Ohio State, and her 31.0 minutes per game were second-most behind Mikesell (35.5 minutes).

Every aspect of her game was a significant improvement over her freshman season, in which she appeared in 30 games off the bench and averaged 2.9 points and 3.4 rebounds on 54.0 percent shooting. But she showed early in this most recent season that she would be a force for Ohio State.

"She had a really good offseason," head coach Kevin McGuff said early in the season. "I think as she gets better, she gets more confident. I still think there's even a higher ceiling for her."

Thierry had 10 points on 5-of-5 shooting in Ohio State's season-opening win over Tennessee, and she went on to have double-digit scoring in eight of the Buckeyes' first 12 games, including a then-career high 23 points on 9-of-11 shooting in Ohio State's 88-86 win in overtime over South Florida on Dec. 20.

She continued stellar play during Ohio State's 19-0 start to begin the season, averaging 12.2 points and 6.5 rebounds on 66.9 percent shooting during that run, and even dropped 20 points and nine rebounds in the Buckeyes' first loss of the season to Iowa on Jan. 23.

The loss to Iowa began a 4-6 stretch to close the regular season for Ohio State, but Thierry continued to impress with averages of 16.4 points and 7.0 rebounds over those final 10 games, and she also hit a new career high with 25 points on 7-of-8 shooting - including a 10 of 14 mark from the charity stripe - in a win over Wisconsin on Feb. 1.

"She had a really good freshman year, and she had a great season," McGuff said. "She's exceptional as needed. So, I have really high expectations for her, and she was really special tonight."

While Thierry's jump from her freshman season appeared to be a dramatic leap, she said it simply came down to having more confidence in herself and her shot.

"Last year, I would say I wasn't as confident in shooting, so I wouldn't ever really shoot the ball unless I was wide open," she said. "Just getting reps in outside of practice and getting more confidence so I can improve when it comes to games. I definitely have a lot more confidence now. I definitely could improve, but looking at where I was last year, and where I am now, I'm very happy and proud of myself for that."

That confidence carried Thierry into the Big Ten Tournament, where she had 20 points on 8-of-11 shooting in Ohio State's quarterfinals win over Michigan. She followed it up with a 19-point, 12-rebound double-double in the Buckeyes' historic 24-point comeback against Indiana, and even in the blowout loss to Iowa in the conference title game, she still finished with 13 points and five rebounds.

That set the stage for another strong run for Thierry in the NCAA Tournament. She finished with 15 points on 7-of-8 shooting in the opening round win over James Madison, though she finished with just 6 points on two made shots against North Carolina in the next round.

It was her defensive ability, though, that helped lead the way for Ohio State in those games. Against UConn in the Sweet 16, Thierry had 11 points and three rebounds while stealing the ball away four times, helping create some of the 24 turnovers committed by the Huskies in their 73-61 loss. She had previously been named to the Big Ten All-Defense Team and a second-team All-Big Ten selection.

Thierry had just 6 points in Ohio State's season-ending loss to Virginia Tech, but it didn't take away from what was a stellar sophomore performance for Thierry. Ahead of her junior season for the Buckeyes, Thierry can continue to grow that confidence that allowed her to succeed this year, and she'll continue to be a significant force for Ohio State.