

Women's Hockey: Buckeyes Earn WCHA Preseason Honors



Coming off their second straight national championship appearance, the Ohio State women's hockey team was well represented in the Western Collegiate Hockey Association preseason honors released on Monday, earning first-place votes in the coaches' poll while also having four players receiving preseason award recognitions.

The Buckeyes, who finished 33-6-2 last season and won the WCHA regular season crown before falling to Wisconsin in the national championship game, received four first-place votes and 46 points in the preseason poll voted on by the coaches, a number that ranked tied for first in the conference with the reigning national champion Badgers. This marks the second-consecutive year where head coach Nadine Muzerall's team earned first-place votes in the preseason coaches poll, as they received three votes in 2022, which tied with Minnesota for the most in the conference.

Ohio State has also placed three players on the preseason All-WCHA team for the second straight season in graduate forward Jenn Gardiner, senior goaltender Amanda Thiele and graduate defenseman Cayla Barnes.

Gardiner, a native of Surrey, British Columbia, returns to the ice for the Buckeyes after leading the team with 57 points in 2022-23. She was also named a top-10 finalist for the 2023 Patty Kazmaier Memorial Award which honors the top player in NCAA Division I women's ice hockey, an award that was given to former Ohio State defenseman Sophie Jaques last season.

Thiele, who also earned preseason All-WCHA honors last season, led the league and ranked fourth in the nation with a .820 win percentage in 2022 (20-4-1). Her 20 season wins tied a program record previously held by Andrea Braendli, who set it in 2018-2019. Barnes is entering her first season with the program after five seasons with Boston College and two years playing for Team USA at the Olympic Games (2018 and 2022). She closed her Golden Eagles career ranked in the top 10 in program history in points (seventh), goals (sixth) and assists (seventh).

Ohio State's freshman class also received a preseason honor as first-year forward Joy Dunne earned a 2023 Preseason Rookie of the Year honor. Dunne, a native of O'Fallon Mo., served as team captain for the United States' U-18 team at the 2023 IIHF World Championships, where she led them to a bronze medal finish and ranked eighth in the tournament with three goals and six points.

Ohio State will start their quest to recapture a national championship on Sept. 29 when they travel to Colgate for a two-game series. The game is slated for 6 p.m.