

# Big Ten Basketball Media Days

Wednesday, October 12, 2022

Minneapolis, Minnesota, USA

## Ohio State Buckeyes

Men's Head Coach

### Chris Holtmann



KEVIN WARREN: The next coach to the podium will be Chris Holtmann from The Ohio State University. Chris and his wife have been active participants in the state of Ohio and have done so many good things in the community. Coach Holtmann has an exciting team this year. We're looking forward to seeing them play.

Welcome to the podium the head basketball coach at The Ohio State University, Chris Holtmann.

CHRIS HOLTMANN: Great to be with you guys here. Thank you, Commissioner Warren. Thank you for your leadership. Appreciate the city of Minneapolis hosting Big Ten Media Day. I know there's some reports of coaches complaining about it being up here, but suffice it to say I wouldn't take it personal. We're coaches, we'd complain if it was in our back yards.

We are well at work here in our program at finding our identity as a group, like so many teams in college basketball and like several teams in the Big Ten. We have a lot of new faces this year. I think that's exciting on one hand. It's also challenging on the other hand.

We really are excited about so many of the new faces as well as some of the returning faces that we have within our program. We have four returning players with the addition of Justice Sueing, who is now healthy as a returner. Zed Key, Gene Brown, Kalen Etzler, and then we have eight new players. We have four freshmen who will all play an important role this year in terms of playing as well as the addition of some exciting transfers.

I believe the Big Ten has been the deepest league in college basketball the last three years. I honestly don't see that changing. Tremendous coaches. Tremendous players. Great depth of talent. Incredible fan bases and venues. It really is a premier league in college basketball. We're excited about this upcoming season.

I'll begin with questions here.

**Q. What does it say about Isaac and kind of your**

**confidence in him, what he's shown you, that you picked him to represent the program before he's actually played a game?**

CHRIS HOLTMANN: Yeah, he has a tremendous personality, really charismatic personality. Obviously was an important player at Oklahoma State for four years. Was well-coached there.

I think he's a young man that, as you'll get to know, just has a tremendous charisma and leadership ability. Obviously will play some point guard position for us.

I expect all three of the young men here to play an important leadership role as well as Gene Brown this year.

**Q. You've said throughout the pre-season with so many new faces you won't know what you don't know until you realize you don't know it. Is there a thing or two you have started to know that you didn't know when you started?**

CHRIS HOLTMANN: I think The Bahamas helped us learn some things about our group. You had a chance to play some older guys. I just think the general who could compete in a really physical game that we had against some of those older teams that we played over there, that was helpful.

I think we are seeing that on a regular basis. There's a physical element now to how we're playing, how we're trying to play. You get an idea maybe who's ready for that.

But when I said you don't know what you don't know with a young and new team, I think when you get to games, you really do find out some things that maybe you tried to anticipate in terms of areas you feel like maybe you're a little bit behind that you need to improve in, but you do get exposed in games unlike in practice.

**Q. We got to see the open practice the other day. Justice Sueing looked like he was back making a lot of the plays when he was healthy two years ago. After two weeks, has he been restricted at all, on any kind of a pitch count, what you're seeing out of him so far?**



**Do you manage that going forward?**

CHRIS HOLTMANN: Yeah, no, I appreciate the question.

He's had no limitations right now. He did tweak his ankle and that limited his practice last week. He was out probably for three or four days with just an ankle sprain. Outside of that he's really been full go.

You're starting to see some things. I think there will be a little bit of rust once we get to games as well. But he's in great shape. He's really worked hard. I'm really proud of Justice. As a coach, really happy for a young man to get back and be able to enjoy his final year of college basketball.

**Q. The Big Ten has always been known for its dominant centers in the league. How important do you think it is to have one this season, especially in this age of positionless basketball?**

CHRIS HOLTMANN: Yeah, the Big Ten is really unlike any other conference in the country in terms of how dominant the center play has been the last couple years.

I'm excited about Zed Key and Felix Okpara, a 6'11" freshman who we're excited about his growth and development at that position.

The number of just big bodies you face, then some guys who maybe are big bodies but aren't the traditional centers, Trayce Jackson-Davis comes to mind, present great challenges as well.

**Q. With so many bigs in the Big Ten, how important is it to figure out exactly what you have in Roddy and Bruce, figuring out some of the options you have in your backcourt?**

CHRIS HOLTMANN: I think that will be as key as anything to our season this year, is not just the development of our four freshmen but the development of those two young guards and the growth that they take.

We know how important guard and wing play is in college basketball, and certainly in the NCAA tournament, the versatility that provides.

I don't think there's any question that the development of really all four of our freshmen that are going to play is going to be critical to this team. Just the growth that those guys experience. I was asked the other day, do I see those guys developing at the rate that Malaki developed. That's a hard ask to put on guys. I think they have to run their own race. But we certainly are going to need

important play from those two guys as well as all four of our freshmen this year.

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