

Preview: Ohio State - Georgetown

Written by {ga=furls}

Friday, March 30 2007 7:00 PM -

It's go time. After a week of hype, and a plethora of Oden v. Hibbert stories, game time is finally here. At 6:07 PM, Ohio State and Georgetown will face off. The winner will advance to the national championship game. In Furls' preview of this clash of the titans, he goes on record as saying that he doesn't like this matchup for the Bucks, who he feels may struggle with the Hoyas big, athletic forwards. Furls breaks it all down for us in his latest.



A deep run in the NCAA tournament is as much about luck as it is about skill and up until now the Buckeyes have been very lucky. So far the Buckeyes have been matched up with teams that primarily feature solid guard play, but not much else. Aside from the fact that all three of Ohio State's prior opponents have shot the lights out, this has been a very good thing. All that is about to change.

Ohio State has drawn its worst possible match up in the national semifinals, Georgetown. Yes, everyone knows that Roy Hibbert is on that team, and yes, he is very big, but that is not the problem. The Buckeyes have an answer to Hibbert. The real problem is that the Buckeyes do not have any big men that match up (even reasonably well) with Georgetown's oversized, athletic forwards.

There is no answer on Ohio State's roster for Jeff Green. Actually, both of Ohio State's losses since Oden's return have come to teams that feature athletic, scoring forwards (Wisconsin's Alondo Tucker and Brian Butch and Florida's Corey Brewer). Ohio State really does not feature a power forward.

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Typically Ohio State starts Ivan Harris at the “power forward” spot, but Harris’ defense is suspect at best. In order to actually get any defense at the forward position Ohio State has to bring Othello Hunter in to play the four. Playing Hunter at the four reduces Ohio State’s depth at center. Given Oden’s recent foul trouble, I am not so sure that this is the answer for the Buckeyes, unless you think Matt Terwiliger vs. Roy Hibbert is a favorable match up.

Ohio State’s issues defending forwards are further complicated by the offensive scheme run by the Hoyas. Georgetown runs a modified version of the Princeton offense. The Princeton offense is a slow, methodical half court offense that focuses on movement away from the ball and high post passing (someone please deliver these links to Mike Brown [101](#) and [102](#)). This defense is designed to beat Ohio State’s best defensive scheme, the 2-3 zone.

Ohio State uses the 2-3 zone to capitalize on Greg Oden’s dominance underneath and his ability to help his fellow defenders stop dribble penetration. A 2-3 zone allows Ohio State to surrender the three point shot, but in return the Buckeye defenders are able to play 2-3 steps off their marks. This prevents all but the most adept guards from gaining substantial penetration.

There are two basic ways to beat this defense, lucky shooting and zone overloads. Ohio State nearly fell victim to lucky shooting against Tennessee, but that is the chance that a team takes when they play this defense. Essentially, they are daring the opposing team to beat them from the outside. The other method, the zone overload, is the one that the Princeton offense utilizes to neutralize the 2-3 zone.

With good movement away from the ball and quick passing, particularly in the high post, the Princeton offense is able to force an overload (two offensive players defended by a single defender) in a zone. These plays typically attack a forward in the low post and lead to easy backdoor layups. In order for the offense to be effective, the passes must be quick enough to beat the defensive shift from the weakside. Georgetown’s offense is definitely good enough to do this.

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To make a long story short, this match up is further proof that god does, in fact, hate Cleveland sports. I know that Archie Griffin will be calling me in short order to collect my alumni card and to inventory and summarily burn all of my Buckeye gear, but I have to say, I think Georgetown will win this one.

This does not mean that the Buckeyes (and I for that matter) are without hope. Ohio State can win this game, but they need to execute in order to do so. I think they can and will win if (and only if) they are able to accomplish some of the following:

1. Greg Oden gets Hibbert into foul trouble early. It is a good thing Hibbert is 7'2", because if he were 7'0" he would not be a serviceable center. He has horrid footwork and virtually no athleticism. In the low post, he is no match for Oden, but only if Oden is not hell bent on shoving him under the hoop (and drawing needless offensive fouls). If Oden plays smart basketball and the Buckeyes actually get him the ball, Oden will get Hibbert in foul trouble.

1. Ohio State must shoot better from range. Georgetown is bigger and more physical, not at the center position, but in general terms. If Ohio State can hit some of the open threes that they have been missing of late, that will force these bigger defenders out, where they can be beat off the bounce.

1. Ohio State guards must get to the rim. Ohio State has been most effective playing a three guard set this year. They really do not have the personnel to match up forward for forward with Georgetown, so they must capitalize on the speed and athleticism of Ron Lewis, Jamar Butler, and Mike Conley. If they score, great, but if not, they will get to the line and that is even better because....

1. Georgetown is NOT a deep team. Ohio State can gain a serious advantage if they can get any of the Hoya's starters in foul trouble.

1. If/when Greg Oden is in foul trouble Ohio State needs to run and gun. The Buckeyes

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can get up and down in a hurry and have proven to be a very good small team with Oden out. Should they find themselves in that situation in this game, the Buckeyes are going to be best served by going ultra small and running the hell out of the Hoyas. In this situation I think Matt Terwilliger is a key cog. He is a solid rebounder that gets up and down in a hurry, and in a Bill Walton style, Terwilliger is always looking to get the ball down court in a hurry in transition.

The Buckeyes can win this game, but this is a match up that favors Georgetown. This in no way means that I think Georgetown is the better team, actually I think they are about the 10th best team in the country and I figure Ohio State is about the third best, but the personnel and systems are such that if things go as they should and both teams are able to play within their systems, Georgetown should win. It is now up to the Buckeyes to remove the Hoyas from their comfort zone. If they can do so, they will win, if they allow the Hoyas to play their game it will be ugly.

Go Bucks! By the way, it has been 1,225 days since Michigan has beaten Ohio State!