

Turner brings potency to Buckeyes offense

By Stephen Hennessey
COLLEGIAN STAFF WRITER

Talor Battle and Ohio State's Evan Turner talk almost every day.

Two of the nation's best guards played for USA's World University squad

MEN'S BASKETBALL

this summer. The two juniors have remained in touch and have constantly talked trash about tonight's game for the past year.

Battle, who calls Turner one of his better friends, admitted the Nittany Lions will have their work cut out for them trying to guard Turner.

"Nobody himself can really guard him. He's too big and too strong," Battle said. "We're gonna have to have some help-side defense. But at the same time, we have to contain the basketball because he has a lot of shooters in [Jon] Diebler and [William] Buford on the wings. Every team has a tough time guarding him."

Penn State will face Turner and the No. 13 Buckeyes at 6:30 tonight at Value City Arena in Columbus, Ohio.

The game will be broadcast live on the Big Ten Network.

Despite missing six games after fracturing his back, Turner is in the conversation for national player of the year. The 6-foot-7 junior is one of the most well-rounded players in college basketball, averaging 18.4 points, 9.5 rebounds and 5.7 assists per game.

Without Turner in the lineup, the Buckeyes struggled to a 3-3 record. With their star point guard in the lineup, the Buckeyes are 13-3 and one of the most feared squads in the Big Ten.

Coach Ed DeChellis said Turner makes his teammates better when he has the ball.

"You got to contain him, but he has the ball in his hands so often," DeChellis said at his press conference Monday. "If there's a missed shot, he's getting the ball, and he's pushing it and he's gonna make a play for somebody. He's very good at getting it into the seams and producing for other guys."

If a smaller player tries to guard Turner, he can shoot over him, DeChellis said. If a taller player does, Turner is explosive enough to drive.

Iowa managed to hold the



Talor Battle talks about how the Lions' lost to Purdue Sunday on the Hardwood Hits blog: psucollegian.com

Buckeye to two first-half points. DeChellis watched the tape from last week's matchup and thought the Hawkeyes succeeded at managing the offense for an extended amount of time, which kept the ball out of Turner's hands.

Last season, former Lion forward Jamelle Cornley guarded Turner and held him to six points in 38 minutes of play.

The Lions will likely deploy a tall, athletic player on Turner, possibly junior forward D.J. Jackson or sophomore guard Chris Babb.

But on offense, Battle has a plan to take his friend out of the game.

"He claims he's going to guard me. We'll see how that goes," Battle joked. "I'll just try and get him in foul trouble and get him out of the game quick."

To e-mail reporter: sih5037@psu.edu

Cammeron Woodyard thrives on the scout team. | **SPORTS**, Page 10.



Ohio State junior guard/forward Evan Turner (21) drives against Northwestern on Jan. 19. Turner and the No. 13 Buckeyes host the Nittany Lions at 6:30 tonight at Value City Arena.



Tyra Grant (left) attacks the basket against Purdue Thursday. Penn State is second in the Big Ten standings.

Conference up for grabs in last month

By Audrey Snyder
COLLEGIAN STAFF WRITER

Coquese Washington predicted Thursday night that No. 8 Ohio State wouldn't run away with the conference title.

She said there's just too much competition in the Big Ten for one team to continue its dominance.

And the third-year coach was right.

Just three days after sharing her opinion about the Buckeyes, Ohio State lost to an Indiana team that had a losing conference record.

At the beginning of the season, coaches across the Big Ten said their teams would be competing in one of the nation's most balanced conferences, and so far it's been proven true. For the first time in the history of the conference, each team has at least 11 total wins, and as the favorites

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tumble and the underdogs make a run for it, there's no obvious favorite.

"I knew this was going to be a very competitive season, mainly due to the youth movement," Wisconsin coach Lisa Stone said in a teleconference Tuesday.

"Last year was a great Big Ten season, four teams deep in the tournament, and our strength of schedule and RPI have represented themselves throughout."

Sunday, the conference's top-four teams lost, yet the youth that the top team's have gives their coaches plenty of optimism.

Washington said freshman center Nikki Greene gives Penn State an inside presence it previously lacked, while Purdue's K.K. Houser has kept her team in the thick of the conference race.

Houser averages six points per game and played an instrumental role in her team's upset victory over Penn State Thursday. The freshman made 13 consecutive free throws and combined to

score 36 points during Purdue's wins over Ohio State and Penn State.

And then there's Karisma Penn.

The Illinois freshman started every game so far this season and is second on the team averaging 11.5 points per game.

"It's a young league, it's got new coaches," Boilermakers' coach Sharon Versyp said during Tuesday's teleconference. "Last year we had top recruits in the country, and I just think our conference is going to continue to escalate with the talent. I think our freshmen have really set the tone for this conference."

But how much these freshmen can help their respective squads make a surge for an NCAA tournament bid remains to be seen.

While Ohio State, Purdue, Michigan State and Minnesota all made the tournament last season, the coaches said the selection committee needs to take a close look at the quality of the

conference this time around.

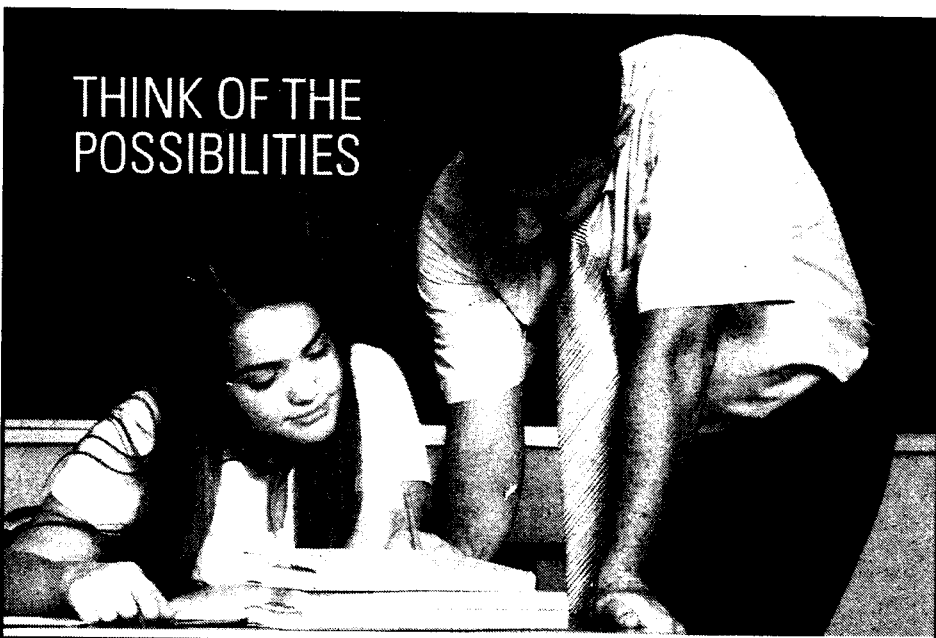
Michigan State coach Suzy Merchant said there's really no top, bottom and middle in the Big Ten.

While she's disappointed the conference doesn't receive more recognition on a national level — since the Big 12, ACC and Big East all have at least four teams ranked in the top-25 — Merchant said she doesn't want the conference's head-to-head records to cost its teams a chance at the tournament.

"I think everybody in our league understands there's good players and good coaches in our league," Merchant said in Tuesday's teleconference.

"It will be interesting to see what they do because, to me, those people in that room, do they really look RPI? Do they really look at strength of schedule? It will be interesting to see how things pan out."

To e-mail reporter: aas5220@psu.edu



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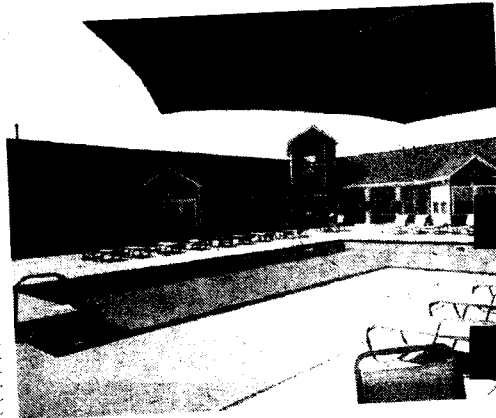
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