

Ohio State Buckeyes vs. Kansas Jayhawks

Coaches:

Thad Matta: 8th year at Ohio St.; 323-95 overall record as a head coach; 2 final fours at Ohio St.

Bill Self: 9th year at Kansas; 475-157 overall record as a head coach; 2 final fours at Kansas

Records:

Ohio State: 31-7 (13-5) conference

Kansas: 31-6 (16-2) conference

Matchups:

Backcourts: Ohio State's floor general is Aaron Craft a soph. out of Findlay, OH. He leads the team with 95 steals and will be a huge factor in stopping Kansas' Tyshawn Taylor. In their meeting on December 10th, Craft held Taylor to 3-9 from the field and forced 7 turnovers. At the other guard, Ohio State will look towards its lone senior in William Buford. Buford has been held to an average of 11.3 PPG in the tournament, three points under his season average of fourteen. If Craft plays Taylor to a draw and disrupts the Kansas offense, Ohio St. should like its chances.

Edge: Ohio St.

Frontcourts: The matchup of the night is between All-Americans Jared Sullinger and Thomas Robinson. Sullinger, who didn't play in the first matchup between these two teams, was out with back problems. Sullinger will likely swing the 34-26 points in the paint advantage that Kansas had in their first matchup. Look for forwards Lenzelle Smith Jr. and Deshaun Thomas to put up some points. Kansas' Jeff Withey is also a force in the paint with 20 blocks in the tournament so far. He had 10 in the regional semifinal against Ohio. He will be matched up against reserve Evan Ravenel or may see Sullinger matched up against him.

Edge: Even

Intangibles: Ohio St. has the motivation from the loss in the previous matchup on Dec. 10th. With a neutral court neither team will have a significant fan advantage. Look for this to come down to a coaching decision or a player to have a breakout game.

Edge: Even

The Bottom Line: With the frontcourt battle playing out to a draw, look for Ohio St. to take advantage of its backcourt advantage. William Buford will be a huge factor in the outcome of this game. Aaron Craft needs to create energy with his defense and disrupt the Kansas offense.

Final Score: Ohio St. 78 Kansas 72