

Matas Buzelis vs Austin Spurs January 9, 2024

In a game where Matas Buzelis was tasked with playing as his team's small ball center, he managed to show his positional versatility and flexibility to do what his team needed; while also showing the current limitations on his game.

Buzelis' shot creation ability stood out in this game, as while he does not have a developed handle yet he effectively creates space by leveraging his footwork and strength to bump opposing players for open looks, particularly against smaller defenders. An example of this was at 4:20 of the second quarter where Buzelis received the ball on the wing and leveraged a hesitation dribble to drive, then bump his defender with his hip to create space when he 'stopped on a dime' to pull up for the open jump shot.

His playmaking was subpar in this game, as he turned the ball over in a variety of ways whether it be because of his handle or forcing the ball through thin passing lanes. On top of this, his only assist this game was a late shot clock heave by his teammate. Buzelis did a great job of moving off the ball to create space for his team and opportunities for himself overall. His aggressive cutting and backdoor screens led to easy points and displayed his off ball creation upside.

Buzelis displayed his versatility defensively in this game as he defended 1 through 5 at some point of this game. While the results were a mixed bag, seeing him be physical and methodical with his approach was a good sign. An example of a great defensive play was at 8:13 of the 4th quarter, where Buzelis was helping on a drive to the paint as the weak side defender to block a layup attempt, then blocked a subsequent putback, and finally tipped the loose ball to his teammate to start a fast break opportunity. His rebounding was also very impressive this game as Buzelis made a noticeable emphasis on crashing the glass on the defensive end, especially since he was often the biggest player on the court for his squad.

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