

Buckeyes Blow 18-Point Lead, Fall To Penn State 83-80 To Snap Seven-Game Win Streak



Ohio State finished its week on a sour note on the road against Penn State on Saturday night, blowing a double-digit second-half lead to fall to the Nittany Lions 83-80 at the Bryce Jordan Center. The loss snapped a seven-game win streak for the Buckeyes (8-2, 1-1 in Big Ten), while also giving them its first conference loss of the season.

The Buckeyes (8-2, 1-1 in Big Ten) led by as many as 18 points in the second half but saw its lead quickly diminish in the final minutes due to an intense late-game rally from the Nittany Lions. Penn State outscored Ohio State 48-28 in the game's final 16:23, sparked by an 11-0 run midway through the half and 25 combined points from guards Kanye Clary and D'Marco Dunn, to storm back and come away with a dramatic three-point victory.

Ohio State jumped out to a blazing start against the Nittany Lions, quieting the home crowd with four makes in its first five attempts — with three of those baskets coming from beyond the arc — to take a quick 11-4 lead. The Buckeyes' shooting prowess did not last for long, though, as they misfired on six of their next seven shots to allow Penn State to slowly crawl back in the game and eventually tie the score up at 14 with 13:11 remaining after a three-pointer from forward Leo O'Boyle.

After another Penn State make gave them its first lead at 17-16, Ohio State answered back with four-straight baskets to reclaim a 26-20 advantage, with five of those points coming from Middleton, who came off the bench and connected on a three-pointer and a jumper on back-to-back shots. This stretch helped turn the game back in the Buckeyes' favor, sparking an extended 17-8 run that put them ahead 34-24 with 6:13 left following Middleton's third triple of the half.

Penn State tried to trim the deficit down at the end of the half, trailing by just seven points with 4:32 left. But the Buckeyes finished strong on both ends, holding the opponent scoreless for the remainder of the period — and conversely, connecting on two free throws and a Gayle three-pointer — to hold a comfortable 41-29 advantage heading into the locker room.

Ohio State continued to build upon its strong play coming out of halftime, outscoring Penn State 11-6 in the first 3:39 of the period to take a commanding 52-35 lead and force a Nittany Lions timeout. All of those points came from the formidable scoring trio of Battle, Gayle and Thornton, who connected on four of the Buckeyes' first eight shots during that stretch.

This was the largest lead Ohio State held all game, though. Just a few minutes later, Penn State made four of its next five shots, allowing it to embark on a quick 9-2 run and trim the deficit to just 11 points with 12:45 left. After Key and O'Boyle traded baskets, the Nittany Lions scored another five-straight points to find themselves within double digits, trailing just 59-51.

Ohio State's lead continued to falter in the ensuing minutes, where a three-pointer from Nittany Lions guard D'Marco Dunn cut the deficit to just two points with 7:23 left, capping off an 11-0 run for the home team that lasted 3:15. After a made free throw from Middleton, Penn State trailed by just one point with 6:51 left after a two-point make by forward Zach Hicks.

The Buckeyes responded quickly with five points from Gayle and two from Thornton to find themselves back up 72-66 with 4:30 left in the game, but the Lions battled back again, this time tying the game at 74 after a made three-point basket from O'Boyle. After a series of misses, Okpara put the Buckeyes back up front 76-74 after he corralled in an offensive rebound off a Thornton miss and layed it in the basket, but Penn State instantly responded with a basket of its own to tie it at 76.

After an Okpara turnover, Penn State delivered the game's biggest basket when guard Ace Baldwin Jr. connected on a three-pointer, giving the Nittany Lions a 79-76 lead with 32 seconds left. After Thornton and Hicks traded free throws, Ohio State had one last gasp, but a three-point attempt from Battle with nine seconds bounced off the rim and into the hands of a Nittany Lions defender, forcing the Buckeyes to foul and give Penn State two more free throws, where they soon held on to the three-point victory.