

Buckeyes Lose Back-And-Forth Battle At Iowa, Fall 79-77 For 15th Straight Road Loss



Ohio State's road losing streak reached 15 games in a back-and-forth contest that featured 10 lead changes Friday night at Carver-Hawkeye Arena, falling to Iowa 79-77 due to a subpar defensive performance and a series of late mistakes.

The Buckeyes (13-9, 3-8) — who have also lost four games in a row — had four players score in double figures but allowed Iowa (13-9, 5-6) to shoot 54.7 percent from the field and make 18 of its 22 free throws. Ohio State also failed to record a fast-break point, while the Hawkeyes totaled 17 in transition.

Much like Ohio State's previous contest against Wisconsin, both teams jumped off to hot starts on the offensive end. The Buckeyes and Hawkeyes combined to make 14 of the game's first 21 shots before the first timeout, a back-and-forth sequence that ended with a layup from Iowa forward Ben Krikke that put the home team on top 17-15 with 13:32 left.

Ohio State reclaimed the lead coming out of the break with consecutive layups from freshman forward Devin Royal — who was called on early after fellow first-year Scotty Middleton was ruled inactive before the game with a lower-body injury. After Iowa retook the lead with a 6-2 run — aided by a slowed Ohio State offense that missed five of its next six shots — Royal made his third interior basket of the half to tie the game at 23 with 8:09 left in the period.

Iowa broke the tie with four straight points, but it was answered by a 9-2 run for the Buckeyes that was spearheaded by Roddy Gayle Jr., who scored five during that stretch. Things continued to seesaw as the half progressed, with the two teams exchanging baskets on five straight possessions. But Ohio State was still able to hold onto a 36-33 lead with 2:35 left after two free throws from sophomore center Felix Okpara.

Coming out of the final media timeout of the half, Iowa benefited from two straight offensive rebounds to give Josh Dix an open three-pointer, tying the game at 36. But the Buckeyes came back with a left-

handed hook shot from Okpara, who then blocked a shot on the other end to preserve the two-point lead heading into the locker room.

Ohio State shot an efficient 50.0 percent from both the field and the three-point line in the game's first 20 minutes, hitting on 16 of its 32 shots and three of its six attempts from beyond the arc. This was led by Okpara and Royal, who combined for 18 first-half points after they scored just seven a game prior. Iowa, however, were no slouches on offense either, making 53.6 percent of its makes from the field as well as two of its six tries from three.

The game continued to be a back-and-forth battle coming out of the break, with the two teams exchanging leads and tying three times each in the first 5:40. Things seemed to start going Iowa's way when it went on a 5-0 run to take a 51-48 lead, but momentum back swung in the Buckeyes' direction after Dale Bonner hit a three at the top of the key to tie the game at 51.

Bonner's three ignited a 6-0 Ohio State run that put it up 54-51, but the pendulum swung again when Iowa exploded with eight straight points to take a 59-54 lead with 9:18 left, the largest advantage for either team all game. The Buckeyes broke the run with two Okpara free throws, which allowed it to once again claw back in the game, eventually cutting it to two points, 63-61, after Battle banked in a three.

Ohio State managed to stay within two points in the ensuing minutes, and tied the game at 67 after a Thornton jumper with 4:07 left. It looked as if Iowa created some final separation, scoring four straight points to go up 73-69. But the Buckeyes responded with two consecutive baskets to cut it to one point after an Okpara dunk with 1:04 left.

Ohio State had a chance to take the lead on its next possession, but it squandered the opportunity after Okpara was called for a double-dribble. Iowa then made six of its seven free throws in the final seconds to preserve a 79-76 advantage with seven seconds left. The Hawkeyes fouled Bonner on the other end to prevent the Buckeyes from attempting a three to tie, and the guard made his first attempt and missed the second on purpose, leading to a scrum for the ball that continued until time expired.

The Buckeyes were led in the loss by Battle, who scored 17 points on 6-of-13 shooting, including 3-of-5 shooting from three. Thornton (14), Okpara (14) and Gayle (12) all reached double figures, while Royal had a career-high nine points along with three rebounds. Iowa was guided by the trio of Tony Perkins, Dix and Sandfort, who added 20, 15 and 15 points, respectively.

Ohio State will look to end its four-game losing streak on Tuesday when it welcomes Indiana to Value City Arena. Tip-off is set for 7 p.m., with the game streaming exclusively on Peacock.