

Buckeyes Secure Double-Bye In Tournament With 78-55 Win Over Penn State



No. 17 Ohio State (21-5, 13-4 Big Ten) warded off high-scoring Penn State (12-15, 6-11) on Thursday, 78-55, securing a double-bye in the Big Ten Women's Basketball Tournament.

Penn State took an early 5-0 lead after scores on its first two possessions, but guard Kelly Jekot's 3-pointer just 51 seconds into the game would be the Nittany Lions' only score for over seven minutes. It was eventually broken with a layup with just 1:59 remaining in the quarter with Ohio State leading 14-7.

During that run, the Buckeyes forced six turnovers as Penn State missed 12 consecutive shots. On the offensive end, Ohio State's 14 points came from senior guard Taylor Mikesell, junior forward Rebeka Mikulasikova and freshman forward Taylor Thierry (four points each), as well as a pair of free throws from junior guard Jacy Sheldon.

The Nittany Lions shook off the scoring drought, however, scoring six points in the final two minutes to trail 18-13 at the end of the first quarter.

While Penn State had troubles on the offensive end in the first frame, it was Ohio State that couldn't buy a basket to begin the second. The Buckeyes were held scoreless for over four minutes to begin the quarter as the Nittany Lions took a 20-18 lead.

Ohio State later regained a 25-20 lead, and after a jumper from Mikesell, she knocked down her first triple since the second quarter of the Buckeyes' win against Wisconsin on Sunday to give Ohio State a 30-20 lead. The Buckeyes eventually finished the first half with a 34-22 lead, led by graduate forward Tanaya Beacham in the frame with seven points on 3-of-3 shooting.

It was a slow start to the second half, with just three made baskets - two by Ohio State, one by Penn State - in the first three minutes as the Buckeyes took a 38-24 lead. The Nittany Lions threatened a run with a triple from guard Niya Beverley, but Ohio State proceeded on a 7-2 run to increase the lead to 45-29 with 4:57 remaining.

Ohio State closed the third quarter with a 51-36 lead as the Buckeyes forced five turnovers in the

frame, continuing to stifle Penn State's high-scoring offense.

After a lengthy delay to begin the fourth due to an electrical outage with the game and shot clocks, Ohio State continued to dominate Penn State, outscoring the Nittany Lions 27-19 in the final quarter for the 78-55 final.

Mikesell led the Buckeyes with 19 points on 8-of-18 shooting. Penn State, which averaged 71.5 points per game heading into the contest, was held to 55 points, its third-lowest output of the season.

With Ohio State's win, it has secured a double-bye in the Big Ten Women's Basketball Tournament. With Michigan's win over Michigan State earlier this evening, Ohio State now needs to beat Michigan State on Sunday and needs Iowa to defeat Michigan on Sunday for co-share of the Big Ten regular-season championship with the Hawkeyes.

Ohio State will finish the regular season at Michigan State on Sunday at 2:30 p.m. The game will be broadcast on Big Ten Network.