

Edey Hammered Ohio State's Depleted Front Court In Eighth-Straight Loss For The Buckeyes



During Ohio State and Purdue's first meeting this season, the Buckeyes largely survived the wraith of consensus national player of the year frontrunner and Boilermakers' 7-foot center Zach Edey, despite losing the services of starting big man Zed Key early in the game.

As Key left the contest with a shoulder injury just five minutes into the game, freshman center Felix Okpara held his own against Edey — holding the Purdue center to 16 points and 11 rebounds, both below his averages at the time. Although then-No. 1 Purdue still claimed the victory, taking down the Buckeyes in a nail-biting 71-69 affair at Value City Arena on Jan. 5, there was still a feeling of encouragement as Ohio State took the top-ranked team to the brink while keeping its starting center largely in check.

On Sunday, however, the Buckeyes were again without Key — who still felt the effects of his lingering shoulder injury — and Edey smelled blood. With Ohio State reeling down the stretch, losing its last seven games entering Sunday's contest, Edey sent them to another defeat with a 26-point, 11-rebound outing to lift the No. 3 Boilermakers to a dominant 82-55 win over the Buckeyes.

With Key sidelined, Okpara regained the starting spot while Eugene Brown III played heavy minutes as a small-ball five, and former walk-on Owen Spencer worked in a reserve role. Although Edey decimated Ohio State's frontcourt, head coach Chris Holtmann was largely complimentary of the way his players battled.

"I thought Owen did a great job, obviously got into foul trouble, but he battled," Holtmann said. "I thought he did a great job. I thought Felix did a good job, Gene did a good job."

As Holtmann alluded to, foul trouble largely hampered the Buckeyes' ability to defend Edey. Okpara

picked up a pair of fouls during the game's first 10 minutes and never truly settled into a rhythm, while Spencer tallied four fouls in just six minutes of action. Brown also registered a trio of fouls, including two in the second half.

While Ohio State struggled with foul trouble all afternoon, Holtmann acknowledged that it played a part in how the Buckeyes approached the game as it wore on.

"I thought we played really hard. I thought we competed," Holtmann said. "We followed the game plan really well, but I think the foul trouble hurt us a little bit."

Not only did Edey get to his spots and score with ease, hitting 11 of 20 attempts, but he also led Purdue's rebounding efforts against the Buckeyes. The Boilermakers cultivated a 44-21 advantage on the glass while corralling 14 offensive rebounds — seven of which were secured by Edey — to create 17 second-chance points.

Edey also impacted the game on the defensive end, tallying a trio of blocks while anchoring the paint for the Boilermakers. He also helped hold the Buckeyes to 20 points in the paint, where Purdue doubled them up with 40 points of its own.

Although Edey had his fingerprints all over Purdue's victory over the Buckeyes on Sunday, Holtmann emphasized that the Boilermakers also got contributions from several other pieces that aided them past Ohio State at Mackey Arena.

"(Edey is) a load in there, but it's not just him," Holtmann said. "They rebound the ball really well. But, obviously, he's the largest player that those guys have ever played against."