

Gayle Pushes Ohio State To Finish Line In Win Over Iowa



Across the first 33:58 of Ohio State's 73-69 win over Iowa on Thursday, freshman guard Roddy Gayle Jr. was held scoreless and had only tallied one field goal attempt.

It wasn't anything out of the norm for Gayle, who's primarily known for his defensive acumen and averages just 3.7 points on 3.7 field goal attempts per game. But in the final 6:02 against the Hawkeyes, Gayle gave a glimpse of his offensive potential, scoring nine of Ohio State's final 16 points while leading the Buckeyes across the finish line and into the quarterfinals of the Big Ten Tournament.

"I really have no explanation for it. You just have to do what you have to do, get the job done," Gayle said of his late-game surge. "I know that Coach (Chris Holtmann) wants me to have my presence felt on the offensive and defensive side, so I just stay aggressive and really defend my man and do as much as the team needs me to do in order to win."

Gayle got things going with a layup to knot the game at 57 with 6:02 to play, scoring his first points of the afternoon while finishing on just his second attempt from the field. That layup set the tone for his offensive aggression, though, as on the next possession Gayle came right down the floor and immediately attacked the lane, but was blocked by Iowa guard Tony Perkins.

Perkins' block didn't deter Gayle's confidence, however. In fact, the Niagara Falls, N.Y., native did not miss from that point forward. Gayle, again, tied the game with a layup, created by a ball fake and jump stop, in the lane to make it 61-61 with 4:12 to go.

But, Gayle saved his best for last. With the game deadlocked at 61, he received a pass from Bruce Thornton before immediately firing from the wing and drilling the go-ahead three-pointer — pushing the Buckeyes into a 64-61 lead, which they would never relinquish.

"In that moment, I just felt comfortable," Gayle said. "Especially with Coach, I believe he has the utmost

confidence in me and respect.

“We practice this stuff, late-moment games, time and score. It just felt comfortable, just felt like another shot, another game honestly.”

Gayle capped off his afternoon by sinking a pair of free throws to extend Ohio State’s lead to four, 71-67 with 33 seconds remaining. As Gayle came up big for the Buckeyes in crunch time, guard Sean McNeil recognized the work Gayle has put into the team while lauding his contributions to Ohio State’s triumph over the Hawkeyes.

“Roddy’s a gamer. He’s been showing it in practice. We all have belief in him,” McNeil said. “It was just a matter of time before a night like this was bound to happen. Credit to Roddy, he’s a big part of why we won tonight.”

Holtmann echoed the sentiments shared by McNeil while noting that Gayle’s late-game execution against the Hawkeyes was the culmination of his season-long growth for the Buckeyes.

“I was really proud of Roddy,” Holtmann said. “He’s put in a lot of work, and he’s had Bruce and other guys who have kind of had really big seasons, obviously Brice (Sensabaugh) is a freshman, and sometimes you can compare yourself to them, and it can bother you. I think he’s just stayed working. We’ve had a lot of conversations, and he’s just stayed with it, stayed working. I was really happy for Roddy to see this moment because we have a really high-level belief in what he’s going to be. We just really do.”