

Mikesell, Mikulášiková Dominate In No. 4 Ohio State's 82-70 Win Over Rutgers



No. 4 Ohio State (8-0, 1-0 Big Ten) opened conference play with a comfortable win on Sunday, going on the road to defeat Rutgers, 82-70.

The Buckeyes were led by the duo of guard Taylor Mikesell and forward Rebeka Mikulášiková, who combined for 61 points and shot 62.2 percent (23 of 37) from the field, while Mikesell was 6 of 12 from deep.

Ohio State took the court without the services of guard Jacy Sheldon, who was out with a lingering lower-leg injury, though it was likely rest rather than her being unable to play considering Sheldon was on the court for nearly all of Ohio State's 96-77 win over Louisville on Wednesday.

Guard Madison Greene started in Sheldon's place and got Ohio State on the board first, taking advantage of an early shot clock violation by Rutgers and scoring on the other end. The Buckeyes later took a 20-6 lead after the first quarter, holding the Scarlet Knights to just 3-of-14 shooting in the first frame while the Buckeyes were 7 of 14, including 3 of 7 from three-point range, two of which were courtesy of guard Taylor Mikesell.

The Buckeyes rotated in just six players during the first quarter, sending guard Rikki Harris in off the bench at points, while Rutgers saw all eight scholarship members of the team - an unusually small roster, considering Division I women's basketball teams are allowed 14 scholarship players - appear in the first 10 minutes.

Mikesell continued dominating in the second quarter, knocking down a pair of triples in the first two minutes, and a later three-pointer gave Ohio State a 39-18 lead with 4:54 remaining in the half.

The short-handed Scarlet Knights began to push, though, ending the first half on a 9-4 run (as Ohio State led 43-28) and continuing that momentum out of the locker room, opening the third quarter on a 9-5 run. Rutgers eventually cut the lead to single digits, with Ohio State leading just 53-45 with 3:25 remaining in the quarter, but Mikesell and Mikulášiková combined for the Buckeyes' next 8 points as they led 61-49 heading into the final quarter.

Ohio State was able to maintain a comfortable lead for most of the final frame, though Rutgers did cut the deficit to 77-68 with 2:22 remaining. Greene responded on the next possession with a driving layup to extend the lead back to double digits, and the Buckeyes kept pushing for the 82-70 win.

Mikulášiková led with a career-high 31 points and added six rebounds while Mikesell added 30 points. Mikulášiková was Ohio State's most consistent shooter on the afternoon, finishing 11 of 16 from the field, while Greene and freshman forward Cotie McMahon each added seven assists. Rutgers guard Kaylene Smikle led the Scarlet Knights with 21 points on 8-of-14 shooting.

Ohio State will return home on Thursday to face New Hampshire, with tip set for 11 a.m.