

No. 12 Ohio State Overcomes 11-Point Deficit In 67-59 Win At Illinois



No. 12 Ohio State (16-3, 7-1 Big Ten) overcame an 11-point deficit against Illinois (8-10, 2-6) on Thursday, coming back for a 67-59 win on the road.

Despite committing 15 turnovers and facing a 33-22 deficit at the half, Ohio State outscored Illinois 45-26 in the second half - and forced 21 turnovers of its own - to secure the win and increase the team's winning streak to six games.

Ohio State's two leading scorers this season - fifth-year guard Jacy Sheldon and sophomore forward Cotie McMahon - got off to a hot start, combining for the Buckeyes' first 14 points of the game as they jumped out to a 14-8 lead. Junior guard Taylor Thierry then got on the board, though Ohio State's only other points of the frame were a layup from Taiyier Parks as the Buckeyes led 18-13 at the end of the first.

Illinois forward Kendall Bostic scored out of the break and the Buckeyes got an ensuing score from Sheldon, but it began an extended stretch of offensive struggles for Ohio State. After Sheldon's basket, the Fighting Illini took off on a 14-0 run, forcing misses on the Buckeyes' next seven shots and forcing three turnovers.

Ohio State's next score did not come until a layup from Parks with just 1:12 left in the half, ending a 7:55 long scoring drought, though Illinois held a 29-22 lead at that point. The Fighting Illini then scored the final two baskets of the half to lead 33-22 going into the locker room.

The Buckeyes were outscored 20-4 in the second quarter and shot just 22.2 percent (2 of 9) from the field, and were out-rebounded 22-13 in the first half. The scoring output in the second frame also set a new program record for the fewest points in a single quarter.

Sheldon was motivated coming out of the half, connecting on back-to-back baskets - the first a three-pointer - that kickstarted a 7-1 run to cut the deficit to 34-29 with 8:05 left in the quarter. Illinois responded with back-to-back scores, but Ohio State answered with a 9-0 run - including triples from McMahon and fifth-year guard Celeste Taylor - to make it 39-38, forcing a timeout by Illinois.

The break worked wonders for the Fighting Illini, as they forced a pair of turnovers and scored two

baskets in the ensuing minutes to maintain a 43-38 lead with 2:51 left in the quarter. But the three-pointer by Taylor was ultimately Ohio State's final basket of the frame, as it trailed 45-42 heading into the fourth after free throws from McMahon and Sheldon.

Ohio State stormed back to tie the contest up at 49 with 7:47 left in the game. The teams then combined to miss their next five shots before McMahon broke through to give the Buckeyes a 51-49 lead, and Ohio State then scored the next four points to take a 56-49 lead, a 14-4 run dating back to the beginning of the quarter.

Illinois responded with a three-pointer and later layup by Bostic to cut the deficit to 58-54 with 2:53 left, but the Fighting Illini were held scoreless for nearly two minutes as Ohio State's maintained a 61-56 lead with 51 seconds left.

Rikki Harris then turned the ball over, but McMahon fouled Illinois guard Genesis Bryant following the steal, and Bryant went just 1 of 2 at the line before Taylor got an easy score at the other end to go up 63-57. A turnover by Illinois then allowed Ohio State to close things out at the free-throw line.

Ohio State was led in the win by Sheldon, who had 25 points on 9-of-19 shooting, while McMahon had a double-double with 17 points and 11 rebounds. Taylor also had 14 points for the Buckeyes, while Cook led Illinois with 16 points and Bostic had an 13-point, 18-rebound double-double.

Ohio State will return to the floor on Sunday, set to visit Purdue for a 2 p.m. tip on Big Ten Plus.