

No. 13 Ohio State Defeats Penn State 83-79 On 22-Point Night From E.J. Liddell



The No. 13 Ohio State men's basketball team defeated Penn State 83-79 at Value City Arena on Jan. 27.

Sophomore forward E.J. Liddell led the way for the Buckeyes (13-4, 7-4) with 22 points and seven rebounds,

"He was tremendous, particularly late with his free throws," Ohio State head coach Chris Holtmann said of Liddell. "He was tremendous at attacking late, I thought he played with great force, particularly in the last part of the game."

Liddell shot 6 of 9 from the floor and 10 of 10 from the charity stripe, granting fifth-year senior guard C.J. Walker's wish.

"C.J. Walker before the game actually was like, 'Can you please go 100 percent from the line tonight?'" Liddell said.

Fourth-year junior wing Justice Sueing played well all-around with 13 points and a team-high 10 boards, along with five steals and two blocks against Penn State (5-7, 2-6).

"I'm really proud him, he made big plays tonight," Holtmann said of Sueing. "Four steals in the first half, and his activity across the game was really important for us."

The Buckeyes roared to a 14-2 lead through the opening five minutes, starting with two free throws by Liddell and followed by a pair of three-pointers from junior wing Justin Ahrens with and-one finishes from senior forward Kyle Young and freshman forward Zed Key in between.

Penn State cut the deficit to 23-16 with 8:55 until halftime on a layup by senior forward John Harrar, but Key responded with two strong finishes inside to push the lead back to 11.

The Nittany Lions cut the Buckeye lead down to 31-27 with 4:40 until intermission on a converted and-one by Harrar following an offensive rebound.

Walker finished an and-one on a fastbreak to push the lead to 41-30 with 2:18 until the midway point.

Aided by three turnovers and three fouls from Ohio State, the Nittany Lions ended the half on a 9-2 run through the final 1:58.

Walker opened the first half with a three-pointer off an offensive rebound that was tipped out by Young on a hustle play, putting Ohio State up 46-39 just 22 seconds into the second half.

The visitors used a 10-0 run to take their first lead of the game at 49-46 just 4:39 into the second half on a pair of foul shots from Harrar and sophomore wing Seth Lundy that were bookended by three-pointers by junior guard Myreon Jones.

Sueing tied the game at 49 by converting an and-one dunk on a strong left-handed drive with 14:54 on the clock. After Sueing eliminated the three-point deficit, neither team led by more than two for 2:22 until the Nittany Lions went up 57-53.

Penn State pushed its lead to 70-62 with 8:14 left on a three-pointer by fourth-year junior guard Izaiah Brockington from Jones. Key responded with a strong finish inside before Brockington split a pair of free throws on Walker's fourth foul to make it 71-64 with 7:34 to play.

Liddell hit a pair of foul shots and scored through contact in the paint to cut the deficit to 71-68 with 5:29 on the clock for the Buckeyes.

Lundy drew Young's fifth foul with 5:01 to play and knocked down both free throws to push the Nittany Lions' lead to 73-68.

Sueing finished strong off an offensive rebound and junior guard Duane Washington drilled a pair of foul shots to cut the deficit to 73-72 with 4:14 to play.

Walker fouled out with 3:29 left, but Penn State senior guard Jamari Wheeler missed both free throws, giving Ohio State an opportunity.

Liddell finished through contact again to regain the lead for Ohio State at 74-73 with 3:12 on the clock. Junior guard Myles Dread drilled a triple for Penn State before Washington answered for the Buckeyes. Then, Lundy knocked down a step-back three to take a 79-77 lead with just 2:07 remaining.

Sueing drew a foul on Lundy, and then calmly knocked down a pair of foul shots to tie the game at 79 with 1:37 left. Then, Sueing stole the ball from Lundy for his fifth takeaway of the night to get the Buckeyes the ball back.

"We saw that Lundy has the hot hand, he had it throughout the entire game, and we knew that on that possession that he was going to try and get a shot off," Sueing said. "So, I knew that he was looking to score, he turned away from me, he exposed the ball a little bit, and that was just enough for me to get a hand on it, and take it the other way. Which we needed, we needed a stop on that possession."

The Buckeyes went to Liddell at the elbow, and he drew a trip to the line, where the sophomore put both free throws in.

After the Scarlet and Gray got a stop, Penn State forced a shot clock violation with just 15 seconds left. Ohio State stopped the visitors again, and then Liddell showed composure with another pair of foul shots to seal the four-point win.

"I was just emphasizing in the last four-minute war that it's winning time," Liddell said. "And there is no better feeling than to get up there and win it for the team. I mean, ice the game, put us up by four. And I was just up there thinking, 'Let's finish the game, let's win, let's go home.'"

Penn State was led by 26 points by Lundy, while Brockington added 18 points, and Harrar gave a double-double effort with a career-high 15 points and 10 boards.

"We knew going into this game that Penn State wasn't going to hold back. they're a good team, they can get going really fast, and that's what they did, especially in the second half. They got themselves going and made it real tough on us," Sueing said. "But nonetheless, our team, we're used to doing that every day in practice, having to come back in situations when we're down by five, down 10, down by however many points.

"So, we just knew as long as we stuck together, made the right plays, and stayed poised, we knew we were going to come out with the win."

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