

No. 3 Ohio State Outlasts Minnesota 83-71, Up To Program-Record 16-0 Start To Begin Season



No. 3 Ohio State survived a back-and-forth battle at Minnesota on Thursday, improving to 16-0 (5-0 Big Ten) to begin the season with a 83-71 win over the Gophers.

The 16-0 start to the season is the best in program history, surpassing the previous program-record 15-0 start by the 2011-12 team. The Buckeyes remain one of just four teams - along with No. 1 South Carolina, No. 7 LSU and No. 8 Utah - still undefeated with the college basketball season underway for nearly two months.

Ohio State started out the game with a 7-0 run, with guards Taylor Mikesell and Taylor Thierry as well as forward Rebeka Mikulášiková all getting in on the action to start. Mikesell helped the Buckeyes jump out to a later 24-14 lead with 1:06 remaining in the quarter, scoring 8 points herself in the frame while dishing out five assists to five different teammates.

Minnesota then scored the final points of the quarter, with a pair of free throws from guard Mi'Cole Cayton and a triple from guard Katie Borowicz cutting the deficit to 24-19 entering the second frame.

Mikulášiková connected on a three-pointer to begin the second quarter, but Minnesota's talented pair of freshmen - guard Amaya Battle and forward Mallory Heyer - began taking over, scoring the game's next six points, before guard Mara Braun made a triple and layup on back-to-back possessions to give the Gophers a 30-29 lead, their first of the game, with 5:43 remaining in the quarter.

The lead changed twice throughout the remainder of the half, with guard Rikki Harris connecting on a three-pointer to give Ohio State the lead before a later layup from Borowicz regained the lead for Minnesota, with the Gophers going into the half up 43-39.

The teams played complimentary basketball through the first 20 minutes, with the Buckeyes shooting 48.4 percent from the field and Minnesota checking in at 45.0 percent and both teams finishing with 20 first-half rebounds, though Ohio State committed five more turnovers in the first half.

The Gophers' lead ballooned to as many as 10 points in the third quarter, holding a 56-46 lead with 3:58

remaining in the frame, with the Buckeyes just 1 of 10 from the field to begin the second half. After Minnesota went up by double digits, Ohio State took off on an 8-0 run to cut it to 56-54, but the Gophers entered the fourth holding a 61-55 lead.

The Buckeyes continued applying pressure in the fourth, opening the frame on a 14-0 run to flip the game from a 6-point deficit to an 8-point lead, 69-61, with 6:59 remaining in the game. Braun later responded with a three-pointer to make it 74-68 with 5:22 remaining, but that would be the last field goal for the Gophers until Heyer found the basket on a driving layup with just 1:29 left in the game and Ohio State leading 79-71.

Harris nailed a pair of late free throws and Mikesell connected on a late jumper, completing the 83-71 win for the Buckeyes.

Mikesell led the way for Ohio State with 22 points on 9-of-19 shooting in addition to seven rebounds and seven assists. Harris added 19 points on 7-of-13 shooting, while Mikulášiková contributed 15 points and four rebounds. Thierry added a game-high and new career-high with 12 rebounds, while Heyer led the Gophers with 15 points on 5-of-13 shooting.

Ohio State will return home on Sunday to face Illinois, with tipoff set for 1 p.m.