

No. 3 Ohio State Overcomes Early Deficit In 80-66 Win Over No. 14 James Madison



No. 3 Ohio State came back from a significant first-half deficit to take down No. 14 James Madison 80-66 on Saturday in the Buckeyes' NCAA tournament opener at The Schottenstein Center.

The Buckeyes found themselves down 35-19 with four minutes remaining in the second quarter but closed the half on a 15-2 run and outscored the Dukes 46-29 in the second half to secure another game in the NCAA tournament.

Despite coming in as the lower seed, James Madison showed some fight early on, going up 8-4 before things got tied up at 10-all. The Dukes went on a 10-1 run from there, though, to go up 20-11 with 2:49 left in the first quarter.

During that run, the Buckeyes began experiencing some foul trouble, as freshman forward Cotie McMahon picked up her second with not even six minutes gone by, and guard Taylor Thierry later added her second foul with under two minutes left in the frame. Ohio State broke James Madison's run with a free throw from forward Eboni Walker and a layup from Thierry, but the Dukes scored the final six points of the quarter to lead 26-14.

The Buckeyes continued to struggle from the floor in the second quarter, starting the frame just 2 of 13 from the field as James Madison's lead expanded to 35-19 with 4:01 left in the half and Ohio State was forced into significant stretches with McMahon or Thierry.

Ohio State began to build some momentum from there, picking up some energy from the home crowd and converting on back-to-back and-one opportunities from forward Rebeka Mikulášiková and McMahon, as well as forcing a 10-second violation on the Dukes.

McMahon's and-one began a 12-0 run for the Buckeyes to end the half - with McMahon accounting for eight of those points - as Ohio State trailed just 37-34 heading into the break. The Buckeyes were down

only three points despite shooting just 31.3 percent from the field and without a make from deep on six attempts.

Ohio State opened the third quarter by forcing turnovers on James Madison's first two possessions of the half, and Thierry converted another and-one opportunity to tie the game up for the first time since midway through the first quarter.

The Buckeyes were later able to take their first lead since the first frame off a pair of free throws from Walker. James Madison guard Jamia Hazell gave the lead back to the Dukes, but McMahon connected on Ohio State's first made three of the game before baskets from Mikesell and McMahon put the Buckeyes up 50-46 with 4:35 left in the third.

Scoring dried up from there, with Thierry registering the game's next points with on a layup with 2:26 left in the frame. The Dukes finally broke their scoreless streak with back-to-back baskets and a pair of makes at the line, but Ohio State was able to carry a 54-50 advantage into the fourth.

The Buckeyes opened the final frame on an 8-0 run to increase their lead to 62-50 with 7:54 left in the game, and back-to-back baskets by Mikesell - including her first three-pointer of the game - pushed Ohio State to a game-high 69-52 lead. James Madison fought back, cutting the deficit to as little as 76-77, but the Buckeyes were still able to secure the win.

McMahon led the Buckeyes with 18 points on 6-of-14 shooting, while guard Jacy Sheldon added 17 points, Thierry finished with 15 points and Mikesell added 14 points. The Dukes were led by guard Kiki Jefferson, who finished with 17 points. The teams combined for 52 fouls - 27 by JMU and 25 by OSU - as Jefferson, McMahon and Thierry all fouled out.

The Buckeyes will now face either No. 6 North Carolina or No. 11 St. John's on Monday, with a tip off time yet to be announced.