

Ohio State Avoids Collapse, Defeats Minnesota 87-84 In Overtime



After blowing a 14-point lead in regulation No. 9 Ohio State (21-3, 10-3 Big Ten) made enough plays in overtime to snap a two-game losing streak with a 87-84 win over Minnesota (19-7, 7-7 Big Ten) on Thursday night.

The Buckeyes led 71-57 with only 5:09 remaining, but a field goal drought that lasted the final 3:34 of the game, combined with some missed free throws and a couple of late turnovers, put the Golden Gophers in position to tie the game.

Head coach Kevin McGuff's squad bounced back from their poor finish to regulation by tallying 11 points in the extra session to come up with the dramatic win.

The Buckeyes used their signature full-court defense to get out to the start they were looking for. After falling behind 5-4 early, Ohio State scored six points off of turnovers during a 12-4 scoring run to take a 16-9 lead with 3:25 to go in the first quarter.

Minnesota guard Amaya Battle - the sister of former Ohio State small forward Jamison Battle - helped the Golden Gophers cut the deficit to 4 by draining a 3-pointer with time dwindling down in the opening frame.

Freshman guard Ava Watson gave the Buckeyes a lift off the bench early in the second quarter. Watson made a mid-range jumper and back-to-back 3-point jumpers to lead the Buckeyes on an 8-0 scoring run.

Rather than sputtering after the Buckeyes' scoring run, as many of the other road teams had previously done in Value City Arena, the Golden Gophers responded with their own 12-2 scoring run.

With her team's lead down to one point junior forward Cotie McMahon got the Buckeyes out of an offensive rut with four points in the last 1:30 of the first half.

Up five heading into the second half Ohio State couldn't do much to increase its cushion in the first five minutes of the third quarter, and Battle scored four straight points in a span of less than forty seconds to get the Golden Gophers within four points at the 5:54 mark.

The Buckeyes added some breathing room with a 12-4 scoring run, led by five points from Watson, and even after a 4-0 Minnesota spurt, they took a 54-46 lead into the fourth quarter.

The Golden Gophers clawed back within five of the Buckeyes' lead after a three-point play from graduate guard Alexsia Rose. However, Ohio State seemed to diminish the road team's chances of a comeback with a 13-4 scoring run over 2:42 to lead 71-57 with 5:09 remaining.

Ohio State only made one field goal the rest of regulation, and the Golden Gophers cut the deficit all the way down to six points with less than a minute to go. McMahon turned the ball over at the 44-second mark and the Golden Gophers made a layup to get within four points of the lead.

Another Buckeye turnover gave Minnesota the ball with 41 seconds to go. Minnesota guard Tori McKinney made a layup at the 35-second mark, and after Madison Greene made one of two free throws, the Golden Gophers had a chance to tie with a 3-point jumper. Sophomore guard Grace Grocholowski completed the miraculous comeback with a game-tying triple at the 8 second mark.

The Buckeyes still had a chance to win the game in regulation, but junior guard Chance Gray had her shot blocked right before the buzzer sounded to send the game into overtime.

McMahon helped steady the Buckeyes after a frantic last few minutes of regulation. She scored layups on back-to-back possessions of the extra period to put her team up by two. On the other end, the Buckeyes gave up four straight second-chance points as the Golden Gophers tied the game at 80 with 1:47 to go.

Senior guard Taylor Thierry grabbed a huge offensive rebound of her own one play later and freshman center Elsa Lemmila knocked down a clutch mid-range jumper right before the shot clock expired to put the Buckeyes back up by 2 points.

Gray came up with a steal on Minnesota's inbounds attempt and found Thierry for a layup.

The Golden Gophers knocked down a 3-point jumper nine seconds later, but Lemmila put the Buckeyes up 3 with a layup with 18 seconds left.

After both teams split a pair of free throws, Minnesota had a chance to send the game into a second overtime with a 3-point shot, but Lemmila blocked a 3-point attempt right before the buzzer sounded to give the Buckeyes the win.

McMahon had one of her best performances of the season in the win over Minnesota. The Buckeyes' star forward led the team with 25 points 10-of-16 shooting and a team-high 6 assists.

Watson's 16 points were her second-most of the season and second-most on the team. Fellow freshman Jalon Cambridge had a game-high six steals and also was one assist shy from tying McMahon's mark of six, and Taylor Thierry led the Buckeyes with 7 rebounds.

Minnesota senior center Sophie Hart led the way for her team with 21 points on 10-of-15 shooting.