

Ohio State Blows Nine-Point Second-Half Lead, Falls 73-71 To No. 15 Oregon



Ohio State (10-6, 2-3 Big Ten) suffered another gut-wrenching home loss Thursday night at Value City Arena, falling to No. 15 Oregon (14-2, 3-2) 73-71 due to a late-second half collapse.

Fresh off their double-overtime thriller at Minnesota, Ohio State seemed as if it was in for a more comfortable victory when it used some efficient shooting and strong defense to build an 61-53 second-half lead with just over six minutes left in the contest. But, like many times in recent Buckeye history, that lead slowly evaporated.

Instead of coming away with another resume-building win, they allowed the road warrior Ducks to storm back and outplay Ohio State the rest of the way, outscoring the home team 20-10 in the final 6:17 while forcing the home team to 3-of-9 shooting in the final 4:28.

Ohio State's matchup with Oregon started similarly to its last contest against Minnesota, where the two teams methodically traded baskets and mini-runs in the early going in the first half en route to a 23-23 tie with 6:38 remaining in the half.

Just like the thriller against the Gophers, it was Diebler's team who threw the first punch of the game. They went on an 8-0 run that elapsed 4:15 and gave them a 31-23 lead with 2:35 left in the period after a Micah Parrish layup. Those were the final points Ohio State would score all half, though, a n offensive lull that allowed Oregon to finish the period strong and trail just 32-27 at the break.

Still, the Buckeyes finished the first half strong on defense, limiting the Ducks to just 1-of-9 shooting in the final 6:05 while forcing five turnovers in that same span. They also received a strong early outing from sophomore forward Sean Stewart, who eclipsed his season-high points in that one period by recording an impressive 12 points on 3-of-4 shooting along with six rebounds.

Ohio State came out of the half with a different level of intensity on offense, making an efficient seven

of its first 10 shots — including three of its first four attempts from three — to lead 49-41 with 13:36 left after a Micah Parrish three. The Buckeyes' offensive efficiency stalled a bit in the ensuing minutes, allowing Oregon to trail just three, 54-51, with just 8:25 left after a pair of free throws from senior forward Brandon Angel, but a stepback three-pointer from Bruce Thornton helped turn momentum back into the home team's favor and start an 8-2 run to put OSU up 61-53 with 6:17 left.

Momentum quickly shifted back to Oregon, though, which turned white hot from the three-point line, making four triples in a span of 3:47 to lead 68-67 with 1:35 left after a long triple from Shelstad. Shelstad's three was part of an 8-0 run that caused Ohio State to trail by three with just 37 seconds left.

Ohio State had one final run in them when Mahaffey grabbed a loose rebound off a Thornton missed three to trail by one, 70-69, with 23 seconds left, and then forced a steal on Shelstad out of the timeout, turning it into two Mobley free throws to go up 71-70 with 12 seconds left.

But Oregon made the final winning play on the next possession after Shelstad drew a foul on Ques Glover on an aggressive drive and hit both of his free throws, giving the Ducks a 72-71 lead with just seven seconds left. Ohio State had one last gasp in the last seconds, but Thornton airballed a three to seal the Ducks' victory.

Ohio State was led in the loss by Thornton, who notched 20 points — 15 of those coming in the second half — on 8-of-16 shooting. Mobley also had a strong second half, scoring 12 of his 16 points in the final period, while Stewart finished with a season-high 14 points and nine rebounds.

Oregon was led by Shelstad, who scored 24 points on 8-of-11 shooting — 4 of 6 from three — while senior center Nate Bittle added 21 points — 14 coming in the second half — along with eight rebounds.