

Ohio State Collapses Late, Falls To Pittsburgh 91-90 On Game-Winning Three In Overtime



Ohio State squandered a chance to return to the AP top 25 Friday afternoon at Value City Arena due to an epic second-half collapse and some poor free-throw shooting, blowing late leads both in regulation and overtime to allow Pittsburgh to come away with the 91-90 win.

The Buckeyes used a crisp start on offense to hold a 12 point lead at numerous times early in the second half, but that crispness entirely evaporated when the Panthers went on a 15-0 run, allowing them to take a five-point lead midway through the half.

OSU showed resolve and went back up by five with 1:37 left in the game before Pitt tied it at 77 at the end of regulation, and the same occurred in overtime when Jake Diebler's team jumped out to an 86-80 lead and then led 89-85 with just 16 seconds left before the Panthers scored six of the game's final seven points, winning the game on a top-of-the-key three from Zach Austin with just 0.4 seconds left.

Both Ohio State and Pittsburgh showed no signs of holiday fatigue early on, with both teams racing up and down the floor to a 10-10 tie with 14:17 left. Despite getting in some early foul trouble after Sean Stewart picked up his second foul of the game with 13:32 left, the Buckeyes delivered the first blow of the game, going on a 7-0 run to take a 19-13 lead after Meechie Johnson Jr.'s second three of the game with 12:07 remaining.

Pittsburgh bounced back with two field goals to cut it to 21-18, but Ohio State continued its hot first-half shooting with seven straight baskets — two of those makes coming on John Mobley Jr. threes — and a pair of Bruce Thornton to hold a 39-27 lead with 6:36 left.

Jeff Capel's Panthers then switched to a zone defense, which seemed to slow the Buckeyes down a bit on offense. They missed three of its next four shots, allowing Pittsburgh to go on a 8-2 run and trail just 41-35 after an Ishmael Leggett layup with 3:18 left.

But the Buckeyes soon found its groove again. Helped by three forced turnovers on defense, Ohio State closed the half strong with seven of the period's final 11 points to take a 48-39 lead into the locker room.

The Buckeyes jumped out to a nearly double-digit lead after one due to their continued offensive excellence, shooting a crisp 69.0 percent from the floor (20 of 29) and 66.7 percent from three (6 of 9). Pittsburgh didn't shoot much worse, making 14 of its 25 attempts (56.0), but it committed eight turnovers that led to 10 OSU points.

Ohio State continued its scorching offense out the break, making four of its first five field goals to go up 57-46 after an impressive alley-oop from Thornton to Stewart with 15:54 left. But the team then began to collapse due to some sloppy play. Due to five turnovers in a span of 7:00, Pittsburgh stormed back with a 15-0 run to take a 61-57 lead, its first lead since the early portion of the first half.

The Buckeyes broke an over seven-minute scoring drought with a Royal free throw, and, after a Pittsburgh layup, connected on a Micah Parrish four-point play and Mahaffey dunk that allowed them to take back a 64-63 lead with 7:09 left in the game.

The two teams exchanged leads off threes from Austin Zach and Thornton, but Micah Parrish's three at 4:12 helped OSU go up a more comfortable 71-67. It was Parrish who came through again with the score at 73-72 in favor of the Buckeyes, as the San Diego State transfer knocked down a corner three to give the Buckeyes the 76-72 lead with 2:06 remaining.

OSU's lead stretched to as high as five after a Johnson free throw, but Pitt stormed back again with another three from Zach and a Jaland Lowe jumper to tie it at 77 with just 33 seconds left.

Both teams had a chance to win the game in the final seconds but Thornton missed a mid-range jumper and Lowe misfired on a last-second heave to head into overtime.

Thornton made up for his end-of-regulation miss by connecting on a stepback three to put OSU up 80-77 on the first possession of the extra period, which, after a Pitt free throw, allowed it to go up 84-80 after two Royal free throws. Pitt tried to climb back with a Leggett layup on the other possession, but the Panthers committed two fouls on their next two offensive possessions — fouling out both big man Papa Amadou Kante and Leggett — that led to four Thornton free throws to put OSU up 86-80 with 1:53 left.

The Buckeyes gave Pitt a glimmer of hope after Lowe was fouled on consecutive possessions — one on a three and another on a drive — that led to five points and just a 87-85 lead for OSU. They then took an 89-85 lead off two free throws but gave the Panthers hope again by fouling Lowe again on a three, allowing the Panthers to trail just 89-88 with seven seconds left.

Ohio State continued to let the Panthers in it due to the free throw line, with Royal missing one of two on the next possession, and they finally broke through when Laland found a wide open Zach on a three at the key to come out with the miraculous one-point victory.