

DJ Carton Leads Ohio State Past Northwestern 71-59



The Ohio State men's basketball team defeated Northwestern 71-59 in front of 6,121 spectators at Welsh-Ryan Arena on Jan. 26.

Freshman guard DJ Carton led the Buckeyes to victory with 17 points on 6-of-8 shooting and scored eight of Ohio State's final 14 points across the game's final 8:33.

"He competed," Ohio State head coach Chris Holtmann said of Carton. "He really competed tonight. In a game like this when you're playing on the road, players are going to have to step up and make plays, and they did that."

Junior big man Kaleb Wesson scored 11 points and grabbed nine rebounds with two blocks, but Carton carried Ohio State once Wesson picked up his fourth foul with 7:35 left.

Northwestern fifth-year senior guard Pat Spencer erased Ohio State's 38-35 halftime lead with a triple to open the second-half scoring in Evanston, Ill. Kaleb Wesson answered with a triple of his own, but the Wildcats were able to use a 6-0 streak to take a 44-41 lead.

Carton and Wesson both scored back-to-back baskets for Ohio State's third 8-0 run of the game. For his second score of the stretch, Carton stole an inbound pass and the lefty raced down the floor, finishing strong with his right hand.

Then, Wesson made a layup despite being fouled after an excellent post feed from his brother, senior wing Andre Wesson. Kaleb missed the free throw, but Andre tipped it up and Kaleb corralled it before putting in another Buckeye bucket.

Sophomore wing Justin Ahrens hit back-to-back triples, sandwiched between Northwestern three-pointers by sophomore forwards Miller Kopp and Pete Nance.

"Justin gave us great minutes," Holtmann said of Ahrens. "Stay ready — that's what that kid does. And I'm proud of him. We had great bench lift. We knew they were really going to shrink the floor on Kaleb

and guys stepped up and made plays.

After Nance's triple with 10:53 to play, Ohio State held between a four- and eight-point lead for 6:58 until consecutive treys from junior guard C.J. Walker and sophomore guard Duane Washington pushed a seven-point lead to 13.

The highlight of the near-seven-minute stretch came on a fastbreak when Washington threw a tough alley-oop lob to Carton, who acrobatically snagged the pass with his off hand and punched in the dunk.

Coming off a heartbreaking loss to Minnesota on a game-winning three-pointer, Ohio State struggled out the gate at Northwestern, falling down 7-0 and failing to score until 4:17 into the game.

Turnovers plagued the Buckeyes early, committing four across the first 5:37 of the game and seven in the first half. Northwestern committed eight first-half turnovers.

"We had to play better offensively than what we did to start," Holtmann said. "We really shared the ball in this game as well as we have all year. Opening the floor a little bit helped us do that. Our ball movement was tremendous outside of the first four minutes. We just were not very good in the first four minutes, but the last 36 we were terrific offensively."

The Buckeyes battled out of early deficits to cut the Wildcats' lead to five on two separate occasions (9-4 and 13-8). After a Kopp jumper pushed Northwestern's edge to 15-8, Ohio State responded with an 8-0 run to take the lead, sparked by triples from Washington and Ahrens and capped by a basket from junior big man Kaleb Wesson.

Northwestern answered with four straight points, but Ohio State regained momentum and a 23-19 lead with a 7-0 spurt coming on an Ahrens triple and four Andre Wesson free throws.

The Wildcats cut the Ohio State advantage to two points, but the Buckeyes fired off another hot streak, scoring eight unanswered points to take a 10-point lead.

After exchanging a handful of buckets, Ohio State led Northwestern 38-29 with 1:58 following a smooth Kaleb Wesson right-handed hook shot. The Wildcats ended the half on a 6-0 streak, however, trailing just 38-35 at the midpoint intermission.

Despite being out-shot by Northwestern from the floor (50 to 43.3 percent), Ohio State led at halftime largely due to its superb three-point shooting. The Buckeyes connected on 6 of 14 (42.9 percent) shots from beyond the arc, while the Wildcats made 3 of 9 (33.3 percent) triples.

Ohio State ended up out-shooting the Wildcats on field goals (44.1 to 37.9 percent) and three-pointers (37.9 to 30.4 percent).

"That's a great feeling," Carton said. "We've gone through a lot of adversity with this team and we fight, and Coach believes in us and that's a big thing here. We all believe in each other and our chemistry is so close. We know that when one guy comes out, another guy is going to step up."

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