

Ohio State Drops 13th-Straight Road Defeat, Falls To Rienk Mast, Nebraska 83-69



Ohio State's road woes continued Tuesday night at Pinnacle Bank Arena, succumbing to another blown first-half lead and a career-night from Cornhuskers forward Rienk Mast to fall to Nebraska 83-69. The loss gave the Buckeyes (13-6, 3-5) their 13th straight road defeat, a losing streak that dates all the way back to Jan. 1, 2023, when head coach Chris Holtmann's team beat Northwestern in Evanston, Illinois 73-57. Meanwhile, Nebraska (15-5, 5-4) won its seventh straight game at Pinnacle Bank Arena and improved its home record to 13-1 this season.

Much like its last game against Penn State, Ohio State got off to a scorching start on offense, connecting on its first four shot attempts — two of those makes coming from sophomore guard Evan Mahaffey — to go up 9-4 in the early going. Unlike Penn State, however, the Huskers also came ready to play on the offensive end, making three of their first four shots to keep the score at 9-7 heading into the first media timeout.

Nebraska took its first lead of the game, 10-9, off a three-pointer from guard Brice Williams, but the Buckeyes bounced back with an extended 13-3 run — aided by six straight Husker misses in 3:49 — to go up 22-13 with 11:38 left.

The Huskers broke their extended scoring drought with a Sam Hoiberg free throw, which seemed to give the home team some life, kickstarting an 8-0 run for Nebraska that allowed it to cut the deficit to 22-21 after a second-chance make from guard Eli Rice.

Nebraska's run was broken by a basket from sophomore guard Roddy Gayle Jr., which gave way to Ohio State making three of its next four baskets — two of those makes coming from sophomore center Felix Okpara — to extend its lead to 30-26 with 4:57 left. That lead was short lived, though, as Nebraska answered with two triples from Mast on consecutive possessions to give the Cornhuskers their first lead, 32-30, since the 15:25 mark of the first half.

After both teams exchanged free throws and turnovers, Dale Bonner was fouled on a corner three, but he misfired on all three free throws. Mast then hit his third triple in 2:10 of game action on the other end of the floor to push the Cornhusker lead to 37-32 with 2:20 left, an advantage they later pushed to eight points, 43-35, at halftime.

Ohio State was outscored by Nebraska 17-5 in the final 4:57 of the period, a poor stretch that occurred due to its poor offensive play. Following the Okpara dunk that increased the lead to 30-26, the Buckeyes made just one of their final five shots and committed two turnovers. Conversely, Nebraska made five of its final six shots — including three triples from Mast — in that same span.

Nebraska opened the second half with a basket from Mast to extend the lead to 10, but it was answered by a triple from Bruce Thornton, who was unable to finish the four-point play after being fouled. After a Nebraska turnover, the Buckeyes got a Jamison Battle three, and — after a Huskers free throw — a Key layup to cut the deficit to 46-43 with 17:25 left.

But that was the closest Ohio State would get all half. Nebraska came out of the TV timeout with back-to-backs threes from Wilcher, which — after four straight points from the Buckeyes — was followed by another two triples from Mast, giving the Cornhuskers a 57-47 advantage with 12:08 left.

Nebraska — or more aptly, Mast — continued its three-point barrage in the ensuing minutes when the forward hit his fifth and sixth triples on consecutive possessions, extending the lead to 65-49.

Ohio State tried to find a spark off the bench by inserting sophomore guard Bowen Hardman into the game coming out of the under-eight-minute media timeout, who hit three of his first five attempts from the field, including two threes. But that didn't do much to shrink the lead, as Mast scored three more baskets to help Nebraska maintain a 76-62 advantage with 3:46 left.

Nebraska then put the finishing touches on the win with five straight points, allowing the Huskers to close out the blowout victory.

Ohio State was led in the loss by Thornton, who scored 16 points on 5-of-9 shooting along with a team-high six assists. Battle (11) and Hardman (11) each reached double figures, while Battle also led the team with seven rebounds. Nebraska was powered in the win by Mast, who recorded a career-high 34 points on 13-of-17 shooting, including a career-best six makes from three on eight attempts. The Cornhuskers' shot 14-of-27 (51.9 percent) from the three-point line, while Ohio State made just eight of its 23 three-point attempts and shot 48 percent from the field.

Ohio State will look to break its extended road losing streak in the same venue where the team had its last road victory, as the Buckeyes will travel to Evanston, Illinois, for its next game on Saturday against Northwestern. Tip off is set for 8:30 p.m. with the game airing on Big Ten Network.