

Ohio State Handles UNC Pembroke For 81-63 Exhibition Win



Sophomore forward Kaleb Wesson posted a double-double performance on 12 points and 10 rebounds, sophomore forward Micah Potter posted a team-high 13 points in only 11 minutes and Ohio State's exhibition Thursday at Value City Arena ended with a 81-63 rout of UNC Pembroke.

In the team's first live action of the season before the slate opens officially next Wednesday at 6 p.m. on ESPN2 against Cincinnati, the Buckeyes jumped all over the Division-II Braves.

"Lot to improve on," said OSU head coach Chris Holtmann. "We have some significant, significant areas that need improvement — significant areas."

In an otherwise dominant outing as Ohio State got to the basket with 40 points in the paint, the Buckeyes turned the ball over 21 times.

"I'm not as worried about our shooting because I think some of that is just you're getting a feel and jitters, and they had some changing defenses — which, obviously, you're going to see," Holtmann said of his team's 5-of-25 clip for 20.0 percent from long range. "We weren't playing guys extended minutes, but certainly turnovers — certainly. We were way too careless with the ball today."

OSU controlled the opening tip and drew first blood on Wesson's tip-in 45 seconds into the game, never looking back the rest of the way and leading for the subsequent 39:15.

Between a pair of free throws and a three-pointer from freshman guard Luther Muhammad, who posted 9 points on 3-of-5 shooting, Wesson connected on a jumper and the Buckeyes were in front of a 9-0 score at the 16:54 mark.

Muhammad cracked the starting lineup with senior guard C.J. Jackson, junior forward Andre Wesson, sophomore forward Kyle Young and Kaleb Wesson.

"It feels great," Muhammad said of starting after his first preseason in Columbus. "Just been a learning process, learning how to play our defense — the type of defense we play, standing the gap — learning the offense, learning the plays and just being a great teammate and coming ready to work every day."

UNC Pembroke got on the board with James Murray-Boyles' layup in the next minute before OSU shut

any momentum down on Young's thunderous dunk. Young, who had 9 points and 3 rebounds, gave OSU an 11-2 lead into the first media timeout. Murray-Boyles dropped a game-high 15 points on 6-of-14 shooting.

The Braves got as close as 8 points the rest of the way, closing the margin to single digits on Akia Pruitt's triple at the 12:03 mark to make it 18-10 before Ohio State answered with a 24-14 edge in the final 11:21 to take a 42-24 lead in the locker room.

Out of halftime, the Buckeyes brought the same energy. OSU scored the period's first 11 points, starting with Wesson's 2-for-2 trip to the free-throw line 26 seconds in and closing on 3 straight points from Jackson that extended the advantage to 29 points before Spencer Levi's layup with 13:37 left made UNC Pembroke's deficit 53-26 at the 16:05 mark.

Ohio State's lead ballooned to 30 points, its largest of the game, after Potter's layup and free throw following the foul culminated in a 3-point play to put the Buckeyes in front of a 61-31 score with 12:19 left on the clock. OSU went back and forth the rest of the way with the Braves, who ended the game with a 32-20 response over the final 11:39.

OSU was 44.3 percent (27 for 61) from the field while UNC Pembroke posted a 32.8-percent mark (22 for 67). Ohio State owned the boards with a 56-35 rebound margin.

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