

Ohio State Overcomes Sensabaugh's Injury En Route To Quarterfinal Win Over Michigan State



Prior to Ohio State's quarterfinal matchup against Michigan State, doubt crept across Buckeye Nation as leading scorer Brice Sensabaugh was ruled out due to knee soreness.

Despite Sensabaugh's absence, Ohio State still rolled past the Spartans 68-58 while leading for much of the way on Friday. Ohio State head coach Chris Holtmann said Sensabaugh tweaked his knee down the stretch of the Buckeyes' 73-69 win over Iowa on Thursday, and since the team's medical staff couldn't give a full evaluation prior to tip-off on Friday, they made the decision to keep Sensabaugh out. Holtmann added that Sensabaugh will undergo further testing Friday evening, and that the team hopes to find out more before taking on Purdue on Saturday at 1 p.m.

"Brice, late in the game last night, said, 'Hey, Coach, I need to come out.' I thought he was fatigued. Then we took him to the bench, then we found out his knee was bothering him. He was evaluated by our medical staff. They decided, rightly and smartly, to keep him out for the rest of the game (against Iowa)," Holtmann said. "We evaluated him last night, our medical staff, evaluated him again this morning. And he's getting testing done tonight. We'll hopefully know more tonight on how significant the injury is.

We're just concerned about Brice, he's obviously got a really bright future," he continued. "He really wanted to play, as did Zed. Both those guys would love to be a part of this. It was clearly the right decision for him. I told him, I said, 'If you say, Coach, I'm playing, I don't know if I'd have let you play until we know for sure the extent of the injury.'"

Holtmann looked at numerous avenues to help stem the tide with Sensabaugh out of the lineup. Tanner Holden registered his first minutes of action since Feb. 16, while Roddy Gayle, Justice Sueing, and Bruce Thornton all benefitted from increased scoring opportunities.

While Sensabaugh entered Friday averaging 16.3 points per game, Ohio State needed contributions from several pieces to fill the void left by him. Thornton and Gayle gave the Buckeyes a scoring punch,

producing 21 and 15 respectively, while forward Sueing added 14 points and four rebounds.

Thornton recognized Sensabaugh's value and added that Ohio State needed several players to step up and produce the factors that Sensabaugh brings to the table.

"Another key thing we lose with Brice's scoring, his three-level scoring, and also his rebounding is going to hurt. Of course, we want Brice on the court. He provides so much spirit with his way of playing and everything," Thornton said. "The next man stepped up. Roddy (Gayle) stepped up. Tanner (Holden) came in and made a big three. Felix had a block. We played with collective effort, and as you see, we keep playing together with a free spirit and this aggression on defense, we're going to keep winning. So we'll keep this up and on to the next."

Sueing echoed the sentiment shared by Thornton, noting that Ohio State's next-man-up mentality shined in the win over the Spartans.

"We love to have Brice on the court, he does so much for us offensively and defensively," Sueing said. "He raises our elevation of play. We have a lot of players on this team that can step up to the plate. Roddy did it. Tanner was able to come in today and make an impact on the game as well. He did a great job. Just overall a great team effort and a great team win."

Ohio State will take on top-seeded Purdue in the semifinals of the Big Ten Tournament on Saturday at 1 p.m. on CBS.