

# Ohio State Overcomes Sluggish Start To Defeat Southeast Missouri State 80-48



Despite a slow start, the Ohio State men's basketball defeated Southeast Missouri State 80-48 at in front of 13,177 fans at Value City Arena on Dec. 17.

Junior big man Kaleb Wesson led the way for Ohio State, scoring 18 points and grabbing 10 rebounds on 6-of-8 shooting, while adding two assists and two blocks. Junior forward Kyle Young also gave the Buckeyes a spark with 10 points and nine rebounds on 4-of-4 shooting.

Head coach Chris Holtmann received excellent production from his point guards. Junior C.J. Walker scored seven points, making 2 of 3 three-pointers with a team-high six assists, while freshman D.J. Carton contributed 10 points and five assists on 4-of-9 shooting off the bench.

Sophomore guard Duane Washington missed the game with a rib injury, and senior wing Andre Wesson replaced him in the starting lineup, drilling 3 of 5 triples and scoring 14 points.

After the Scarlet and Gray started the game with a 7-2 spurt, the Redhawks answered with a 7-0 run to take the lead.

"We just weren't playing Ohio State basketball," Kaleb Wesson said. "We were pressing a lot instead of moving the ball and playing like we've been playing the whole year. We got out of our ways a little bit."

The Buckeyes and Redhawks battled back and forth until the visitors took a 16-12 lead. Ohio State answered with a 9-0 run, sparked by back-to-back triples from Young and Kaleb Wesson.

While they struggled with turnovers offensively, the Buckeyes locked in defensively and held the Redhawks without a field goal for more than eight minutes during the first half. The visitors hit five free throws during that span.

"Our coaches put us in great spots on defense to play their personnel and be able to close out on their shooters and play their drives," Kaleb Wesson said of the team's defense. "In that one-day prep, our coaches prepared us pretty well."

They were able to push their first-half lead to nine points, but the Buckeyes struggled with turnovers and fouls through the first 20 minutes. Despite shooting 63.6 percent from the field and 45.5 percent from three-point range and holding the Redhawks to 28.6 percent shooting, Ohio State only led 35-26 at

the break due to 13 turnovers.

“We just felt like we were out there playing too frantic, not really doing us,” Young said. “We had way too many turnovers starting off, so that was one thing we knew: just take care of the ball. It was just a matter of passing and catching because it was just simple stuff for us. Once we were able to do that, we were back to playing basketball like we do in the second half.”

The Buckeyes led 37-28 in the second half before erupting offensively. Ohio State fired off a 22-2 run, spanning 8:46 and highlighted by four three-pointers and a pair of and-1 conversions. After that run, the closest the visitors would get was 27 points, and Ohio State won by 32.

Overall, Ohio State shot 58.8 percent from the floor and 48.1 percent from beyond the arc, while Southeast Missouri State knocked down just 26.7 percent of field goals and 21.1 percent of triples.

Holtmann was pleased with his team’s defensive effort and used some of the mistakes as teaching moments for his younger players in what became a lopsided affair.

“We had pretty consistent effort for the most part,” Holtmann said. “We had a couple of situations where we lost track of guys and we got beat to the outside. We had a couple times where they ripped baseline in the post on us, but that gives us an opportunity to talk to our guys. I subbed a couple guys out and had that conversation. But overall, our effort on that end was fairly consistent.”

Although the Buckeyes turned the ball over 21 times, the Redhawks were only able to score three points off those errors. Ohio State scored 15 points off 12 Southeast Missouri State turnovers.

Kaleb Wesson gave the Buckeyes and their fans a scare when he went down with an injury less than three minutes into the game. The big man walked off the court under his own power and went straight to the locker room for evaluation. He returned just more than two minutes later.

Holtmann and the Buckeyes left the game feeling uneasy about all of their turnovers, knowing they will have to turn it around four days later against Kentucky in Las Vegas.

“We didn’t play with enough force or strength,” Holtmann said. “It’s just stuff we need to work through and get better at, honestly. I love the 23 assists, but this is now two games where we’ve had a lot of turnovers. We’re playing the best defensive team I’ve seen on film since I’ve been here on (Dec. 21). We’re going to need to be better, for sure. “

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