

Ohio State Snaps Three-Game Losing Streak, Takes Care Of Penn State 79-67 At Home



Ohio State got back on the right track Saturday afternoon at Value City Arena, benefiting from a dominant first half start and a career-high 16 points from sophomore guard Evan Mahaffey to cruise to a 79-67 win over Penn State. The win snapped a three-game losing streak for head coach Chris Holtmann's team and gave the program its first conference win in 17 days.

The Buckeyes (13-5, 3-4) made just 3 of its 18 three-point field goals but connected on 27 of its 59 two-point field goals (45.8 percent) on the day. Conversely, Ohio State held Penn State to just 37.1 percent shooting, while they also held a 43-36 rebounding advantage and outscored the Nittany Lions 40-24 in the paint.

Ohio State jumped out to a blazing start on both ends of the floor, holding the Nittany Lions without a point for the first 4:01 and connecting on five of its first eight shots — three of those field goals coming from sophomore guard Roddy Gayle Jr. — to hold a 10-0 lead and force an early Penn State timeout.

The Buckeyes continued their early avalanche coming out of the timeout, getting two quick baskets from Mahaffey, followed by a dunk from sophomore center Felix Okpara, to extend its early lead to 16-0 and force a second Penn State timeout with 13:26 remaining.

Penn State earned its first field goal with 12:57 left off a one-legged three-pointer from guard Jameel Brown, who rattled home another triple three possessions later to calm things down. But the Buckeyes still were able to maintain a convincing lead as the half progressed, going up 24-11 after another slam by Okpara.

The Buckeyes then hit a wall on offense, misfiring on its next six shots, but Penn State failed to capitalize, scoring just five points during that span, allowing the Buckeyes to hold a 29-17 lead with 2:29 left. Penn State finally broke through with a basket from guard Nick Kern to cut the deficit to 29-19, but Ohio State responded with a floater from Jamison Battle, giving the team their first field goal

of the game with 13:28 left.

The Buckeyes then connected on another floater from Gayle, allowing them to close the half on a 5-0 run and hold a 33-19 lead heading into halftime. Ohio State shot 13-of-28 from the field (46.4 percent) in the first half but missed all eight of its three-point attempts, while they held Penn State to just 7-of-32 shooting (21.9 percent), and held a 20-4 scoring advantage in the paint.

Ohio State kicked things off in the second half much like it did the first, making three of its first four shots — two of those from Mahaffey — to go up 39-23. Penn State quickly responded with a 6-2 run to cut the deficit to 41-29, but the Buckeyes scored five straight points to give them their largest lead of the game, 46-29, with 14:24 left.

After a basket from Penn State guard D'Marco Dunn on the ensuing possession, Ohio State took off again on a 7-0 personal run from Zed Key to go up 53-31. The Nittany Lions responded with a quick 10-4 run of their own to trail 57-41, but they struggled to get any closer as the half progressed. Ohio State soon increased its lead back up to 21, 64-43, with 8:51 left after a Bruce Thornton three pointer, giving him first points of the game.

Thornton's three was part of an extended 9-2 run for Ohio State that allowed it to take a 68-45 lead with 6:51 remaining, giving the Buckeyes some much-needed breathing room as they looked to close out the game.

Penn State did not go away without a fight, though, scoring 10 of the game's next 13 points to trail 71-57 with 3:45 left. It then found themselves within single digits with just 2:17 remaining after back-to-back Penn State triples, forcing an Ohio State timeout.

Ohio State was able to reclaim momentum coming out of the break with two straight baskets from Gayle, which gave it a 76-65 advantage with 1:04 left. After another Penn State basket, the Buckeyes got three straight free throws from Bonner, putting the finishing touches on the 12-point win.

Ohio State was led in the win by Mahaffey, who set a career high in points with 16 on 6-of-9 shooting. Gayle also had 16 on 6-of-9 shooting, while Battle (11) and Key (10) also reached double figures. Penn State was led in the loss by guards Kanye Clary and Puff Johnson, who each scored 13 points, while Nick Kern (12) and Ace Baldwin Jr. (10) also scored in double figures.

Ohio State will look to start a win streak on Tuesday when they travel out west to take on 13-5 Nebraska. Tip off is set for 7 p.m. and will stream exclusively on Peacock.