

Ohio State Squeaks Past West Virginia 78-75 In Overtime Behind Career Night From Roddy Gayle Jr.



Ohio State needed overtime and a career night from sophomore guard Roddy Gayle Jr. to emerge victorious in its final nonconference game of the season on Friday night, defeating West Virginia 78-75 in the 2023 Legends of Basketball Showcase held at Rocket Mortgage Fieldhouse in Cleveland.

The Buckeyes (11-2, 1-1 in Big Ten) squandered multiple double-digit leads throughout the game — including a late 61-53 advantage — allowing West Virginia (5-8) to storm back and tie the game at 75 and force overtime. But head coach Chris Holtmann’s team buckled down in overtime, outscoring the resilient Mountaineers 13-10 in the extra period to hang onto the win.

Like many times this season, Ohio State jumped out to an early lead in the game’s first few minutes, benefiting from three quick Mountaineer turnovers and a pair of Buckeye triples to go up 12-5 before the first media timeout. That lead then swelled to 16-6 after a turnaround jumper from fifth-year guard Jamsion, capping off an extended 11-1 run for Ohio State.

Despite being held scoreless for over two minutes following the Battle jumper, Ohio State was still able to build upon their lead through the middle portion of the half due to some poor Mountaineer offense. The Buckeyes — who held West Virginia to 32.0 percent shooting in the first frame — increased their advantage to 24-10 after four straight points from sophomore guards Evan Mahaffey and Roddy Gayle Jr. But Ohio State’s positive momentum quickly evaporated after West Virginia embarked on an extended 9-0 run — aided by nine straight misses from Ohio State — allowing them to trim the deficit to just 24-21 with 2:30 left in the half after a dunk by Mountaineer forward Pat Suemnick.

After both teams traded sets of made free throws, West Virginia continued to storm back, tying the game at 26 after a three-point make from sophomore guard Kerr Krissa. But the Buckeyes immediately reclaimed the lead off a driving layup from sophomore guard Bruce Thornton, allowing them to take

back some momentum and cling to a two-point lead at halftime.

Ohio State turned the tide on the offensive end coming out of halftime, connecting on five of its first seven baskets — two of those coming by way of Battle triples — to take a 40-30 lead. West Virginia continued to fight back, though, immediately responded with a quick 10-2 run — aided by four straight Buckeye misses — to cut the deficit to four with 13:10 left.

After another miss by Ohio State, Holtmann's squad finally got back on the board with a made jumper from Gayle, which seemed to ignite the Buckeyes on the offensive end. They connected on three consecutive three-point attempts to hold a 53-47 advantage with 8:28 remaining, which then increased to 58-49 after another five points from Gayle.

West Virginia still refused to go away, responding with a 5-0 run of its own, then — following a Battle three — a 7-4 run to trail just 63-61 with 2:47 remaining. After the two teams traded baskets, the Mountaineers tied the game at 65 with a made layup from forward Pat Suemmick, forcing overtime.

The Buckeyes didn't let the blown lead affect them in the extra period, however. They connected on four of their first five attempts from the floor — including a trio of triples from Battle, Gayle, and sophomore guard Bruce Thornton — to jump out to a 77-71 lead with 2:03 left. This sequence proved to be the deciding factor in the back-and-forth contest, where the Mountaineers cut the deficit to 78-75 but ultimately ran out of time for a final comeback, allowing the Buckeyes to hold onto the dramatic three-point win.

Ohio State was led in the overtime victory by Gayle, who produced a career-high 32 points on 11-of-21 shooting, while also collecting seven rebounds and a team-high six assists. Battle added 17, while Thornton contributed 17, including a team-high six in overtime. The Mountaineers were led by guard Rae'Quan Batte, who scored 24 points on 9-of-19 shooting in just his third game with the program.

The Buckeyes will look to inflate their winning streak to four games on Wednesday night when they welcome Rutgers to Value City Arena, the start of an arduous 18-game conference slate that will take the Buckeyes all the way to the end of the regular season.