Ohio State Suffers Third-Straight Double-Digit Loss, Falls To Illinois 87-75

Ohio State suffered its third-straight double-digit loss on Tuesday night in front of a scattered Value City Arena crowd, falling 87-75 to No. 14 Illinois.

The Buckeyes (13-8, 3-7) shot an efficient 50.0 percent from the field and made 11 of its 15 free throws but allowed Illinois (16-5, 7-3) to connect on 31 of its 60 shots from the field, seven of its 17 attempts from three and 18 of its 20 tries from the free-throw line. Illinois also held a 36-28 rebounding advantage and doubled Ohio State's second-chance points 14-7.

Despite the late arriving Value City Arena crowd, both teams raced out to fast starts on offense, with the Buckeyes shooting 7-of-12 to start and the Illini making six of their first 12 attempts to tie the game at 14 before the first media timeout.

Ohio State's hot shooting continued after fifth-year forward Jamison Battle connected on a three, which kickstarted a 14-7 run for the Buckeyes that included four makes in five tries for the home team. But the Illini provided an immediate answer, going on a 7-0 run to retake a 30-28 lead.

After sophomore guard Roddy Gayle Jr. was fouled on a triple and made all of his free throws, Illinois guard Marcus Domask hit a three on the other end, beginning an extended 9-1 run for the Illini that pushed their advantage to 39-32 with 2:40 left. Sophomore guard Evan Mahaffey stopped the bleeding with a made jumper, giving the team their first basket in 4:31 of action. But after two additional Ohio State misses, Illinois closed the half with a made layup by forward Amani Hansberry, allowing them to take a seven-point lead into the locker room.

Ohio State had its five-point lead evaporate due to an all-too familiar scoring drought at the end of the first half. After going up 28-23, the Buckeyes missed one of its final nine shots from the floor along with just one of its final four free-throw attempts. Conversely, Illinois hit on seven of its final 10 shots, allowing it to outscore Ohio State 18-6 in the final 6:47 of the period.

Illinois built upon its lead coming out of the locker room, scoring six of the half's first nine points to go up double-digits for the first time all game. Ohio State cut the deficit to 50-44 after three straight baskets from the sophomore trio of Bruce Thornton, Gayle and Mahaffey, but Illinois responded with a 6-0 run, putting it back up 56-44.

The Buckeyes continued to fight, scoring four straight points — two by way of a pair of technical foul free throws — to cut the deficit to eight with 14:01 left and ignite the scattered Value City Arena crowd. But that was the closest Ohio State would get all half, with the Illini going on an extended 12-4 run to go up 68-52.

Ohio State showed some life in the middle portion of the half with a quick 8-2 run, but Illinois answered with a wide open three from Shannon, who then hit an and-one on the next offensive possession, pushing the lead back up to 76-60 with 6:59 left.

The Buckeyes broke the run with four straight points from Battle and Devin Royal, but Shannon was left open at the top of the key for his third three of the game to go back up 79-64, a sequence that sent many of the Scarlet and Gray faithful to the exits before the final media timeout ended.

Ohio State cut the lead to 10 points, 83-73, with 1:53 left in the contest after another Battle three, but it was insignificant as the Illini scored four of the final six points of the game.

Ohio State was led in the loss by Battle and Gayle, who contributed 21 and 20 points on a combined 16-of-29 shooting. Mahaffey was the only other Buckeye in double figures with 13, while Battle also led the team with six rebounds. Illinois was powered by the backcourt duo of Shannon and Domask, who each scored 23 points and grabbed three rebounds.

Ohio State will look to get back in the win column — and break its 14-game road losing streak — on Friday night when it travels to Iowa to take on the 12-8 Hawkeyes. The game is set for a 7 p.m. tipoff and will air on Fox Sports 1.