

# Ohio State Survives Early Test, Defeats Oakland 79-73 in Season Opener



The Ohio State men's basketball team started its 2023-24 season on a winning note, using a strong second-half performance and some clutch shooting to stave off Oakland by a score of 79-73.

Opening the season with a starting lineup of Bruce Thornton, Roddy Gayle Jr., Jamison Battle, Evan Mahaffey and Felix Okpara, the Buckeyes found themselves in an early hole against the stingy Golden Grizzlies, immediately falling behind 6-0 and then facing a deficit throughout the majority of the first half that swelled to as many as seven points with 11:24 remaining in the half.

Ohio State's early struggles were attributed to some poor shooting, where they were seemingly unable to figure out a smothering Oakland zone defense. They shot just 22 percent from three and 42 percent from the field leading up to the final media timeout of the half. Conversely, the Grizzlies would catch fire in the early portion of the game, connecting on six of their 12 attempts from three in the first half, with two from Blake Lampman.

The Buckeyes would stay within reach, through, outscoring the Golden Grizzlies 20-14 in the final 10 minutes of the half. This run would allow Ohio State to take a brief 34-33 lead with 2:05 remaining in the half after a Thornton three-pointer, only for the lead to disintegrate just one minute later after a made field goal from Trey Townsend.

Ohio State was able to stay in the game mostly due to the efforts of Battle and Thornton, who accounted for 16 of the team's 34 first-half points. They also were strong from the inside, out-rebounding the Grizzlies 21-14 in the first frame and getting 11 points from the tandem of Zed Key and Okpara.

After trading buckets for the first eight minutes of the second frame, the Buckeyes found themselves in a daunting 52-47 hole after a made layup from DQ Cole. But the momentum would immediately shift thanks to a prolonged 11-0 run from the Buckeyes.

This sequence of plays was sparked by a thunderous alley-oop dunk from Thornton to Gayle, immediately followed by a three-point play from Gayle, which gave the Buckeyes a 56-52 lead, a lead that they would never relinquish.

The Grizzlies would not go down without a fight, though. Thanks to the shooting prowess of Jack Gohlke and the play of Townsend, Oakland would stay within reach of the Buckeyes up until the last moments of the game, with the lead shrinking to as low as one point with 2:34 remaining after another three-pointer from Gohlke.

But a corner three-pointer from Thornton with 2:05 remaining followed by a missed three point-attempt by Gohlke would help create some much-needed separation, extending the lead to 71-67 and seemingly putting away the game for good.

The Buckeyes were led in the win by Gayle, Thornton and Key, who each recorded 17 points each on a combined 13-of-29 shooting. The Golden Grizzlies were led by Gholke, who had 18 points on 6-16 shooting, all from beyond the arc.

Ohio State faces another tough challenge on Friday when they host No. 15 Texas A&M. The game is set to tip off at 7 p.m. and will be broadcast live on Peacock.