

Ohio State Wins Fourth Straight, Uses Strong Second Half To Defeat Rutgers 73-51 In Regular Season Finale



Ohio State (19-12, 9-11) ended its eventful 2024-24 regular season on a high note on Sunday, overcoming a sloppy first-half offensive performance and using some stifling defense to hand Rutgers (15-16, 7-13) a 73-51 loss and earn its fourth straight victory.

The Buckeyes — who is now in position to earn a first-round bye in the Big Ten Tournament after winning five of their final six games of the regular season — had 15 turnovers but held Rutgers to just 27.3 percent shooting from the field — including 23.1 percent in the second half — and 25.0 percent shooting from three. That dominance allowed Ohio State to outscore the Scarlet Knights 43-23 after halftime, where it held the opponent without a field goal for 9:48.

Despite not playing a game in a week, there was no rust for the Buckeyes early on. Diebler's team made three of their first four shots — including two triples from Jamison Battle and Roddy Gayle Jr to open the game — and held the Scarlet Knights without a field goal in their first 11 attempts to help them jump out to an early 11-3 lead.

Rutgers earned its first bucket with 12:22 remaining in the half on an Emmanuel Ogbole dunk to cut it to 11-5, but Ohio State responded on the other end with a bank-three from freshman guard Taison Chatman. But that first basket helped open things up for the Scarlet Knights on offense, as they made their next two shot attempts to trail 16-12 with 8:32 left after a triple from guard Aundre Hyatt.

Ohio State reclaimed momentum with two Bruce Thornton free throws and a Dale Bonner triple to go back up 21-12 with 7:34 left, and later stretched the lead to 25-15 after consecutive layups from Thornton and sophomore center Felix Okpara. But Rutgers answered with a 5-0 run — which was sparked by a Thornton turnover, the team's eighth of the half — to cut the deficit to 25-20 with 3:50 remaining.

After Ohio State scored two straight baskets to lead 29-20, Rutgers closed the half strong with a 8-1 run, allowing them to trail 30-28 heading into the locker room. The Scarlet Knights were able to claw

back due to some sloppy Ohio State offense, which had a season-high 10 first half turnovers — three of those by Thornton — and was held scoreless for the final 2:09.

Despite Rutgers forcing another two Ohio State turnovers in the first 3:27 of the second half, the Buckeyes were able to find some breathing room coming out of the locker room, making five of its first seven shots — including two triples from Battle and Gayle — to embark on an 8-0 run and lead 44-33 with 14:04 left.

Ohio State sustained its double-digit lead in the ensuing minutes due to its defense, which held Rutgers scoreless for the next 1:59 — a sequence that was headlined by Evan Mahaffey emphatically blocking Gavin Griffith's dunk attempt — and later pushed its advantage to 52-35 with 9:09 left after triples from Thornton and Middleton.

Rutgers' offensive struggles continued as the half progressed, and the Buckeyes lead increased to 20, 60-40, after a Gayle jumper. The Scarlet Knights stopped the bleeding with a Hyatt three with 5:36 — ending a game-changing 9:48 field goal drought — but Battle came back on the other end with a layup to squash any chances of a late comeback.

Ohio State continued the beat down despite the game being well in hand, outscoring Rutgers 12-6 in the final 4:50 to end its season with a convincing blowout win.

The Buckeyes — who also held a 38-32 rebounding advantage — had four players reach double figures in scoring in the win. Gayle led the way with 14 points on 6-of-11 shooting, while Thornton (11 points), Battle (10 points) and Okpara (10 points) followed. Rutgers was led in the loss by Hyatt and center Cliff Omoruyi, who scored 11 and 10 points, respectively, on a combined 5-of-12 shooting.

With the resounding win over the Scarlet Knights and strong overall finish to the regular season, Ohio State will earn a single-bye and either a No. 9 or No. 10 seed in the Big Ten Tournament. The Buckeyes seeding will depend on the results of the Michigan State-Indiana and Penn state-Maryland games later today.