

Ohio State Wins Third Straight, Crushes Michigan 84-61 On Senior Day Behind Strong Second Half



Ohio State (18-12, 8-11) picked up its third straight win Sunday afternoon at Value City Arena, defeating Michigan (8-22, 3-16) 84-61 behind a stifling defensive performance and strong second half on Senior Day

The Buckeyes, playing 11-deep until the benches emptied, were active on defense, forcing 18 Wolverine turnovers that led to 27 Buckeye points and holding the Wolverines to just 36.4 percent shooting (20 of 55) — including just 33.3 percent in the second half — and 27.8 percent from three (5 of 18).

Ohio State had 16 turnovers of its own that led to 18 Michigan points, but they also held a 40-10 advantage in bench points, a 31-29 edge on the glass while also shooting 56.3 percent from the floor (27 of 58)

Opening with a starting lineup of seniors/fifth-years Jamison Battle, Dale Bonner, Owen Spencer, Zed Key along with sophomore guard Bruce Thornton, the Buckeyes started with a bang, getting a thunderous dunk from Key on the second offensive possession and later using a 6-0 run to lead 10-2 with 13:09 left. Ohio State quickly cooled down with a 2:47 scoring drought, though, allowing the Wolverines to score seven straight points to trail 10-7.

The Buckeyes broke the skid with a Key fadeaway jumper as the shot clock expired, sparking a 9-2 run led by four straight makes from the home team — including Battle's first triple of the game — to go up 19-11 with 8:27 left. The Wolverines did not go away, scoring on each of their next four possessions to cut the deficit to 21-17.

Michigan continued to chip away as the half progressed, and eventually found themselves trailing just one point, 25-24, with 3:35 remaining after two Tarris Reed Jr. free throws. But an Okpara block and

Thornton layup on the other end helped put things back in the Buckeyes' favor.

Ohio State forced three Wolverine turnovers and closed the half on a 7-3 run to lead 32-27. The Buckeyes got 16 combined points from Thornton and Key in the first period and forced nine Wolverine turnovers that led to eight Ohio State points. The Buckeyes did have seven turnovers of their own, however, that led to four Wolverine points and shot just 1 of 6 from three.

Ohio State came out of the locker room strong with 10 straight points — eight of those coming in transition — and held Michigan without a basket for the first 3:25 to lead 42-27. But the Wolverines responded with a 7-0 run — aided by three straight Buckeye turnovers — to trail 42-34 with 15:40 left.

Michigan continued to chip away out of the media timeout, trailing 46-40 with 12:20 left after an emphatic Nimari Burnett dunk over Key. But the Buckeyes answered on the next two possessions with a Scotty Middleton three and a basket from Gayle.

Michigan cut it back down to seven, 54-47, in the ensuing minutes in large part due to a technical foul called on Key, which gifted the Wolverines two extra free throws. But a Thornton three and Gayle and one helped settle things down for Ohio State on consecutive possessions, sparking an extended 13-4 run that put it up 67-51 following a Mahaffey layup with 6:39 left, forcing a Wolverines timeout.

Ohio State increased its run to 20-4 with seven straight points and two more steals out of the break, forcing another Michigan timeout. It continued to pour it on with a steal and five straight points from Middleton, which, after two Will Tschetter free throws — Michigan's first points in 3:27 — was followed by a three-point play from Bonner that put the Buckeyes up 82-53 with 2:46 left.

The Buckeyes then emptied the bench and subbed out seniors Battle and Key, and Colby Baumann recorded his first career point on a free throw.

The Buckeyes were led in the win by Thornton, who had 17 points on 3-of-8 shooting, including a perfect 10-of-10 from the charity strike. Gayle (15) and Bonner (10) both reached double figures, while Okpara had a team-high six rebounds. Michigan was led in the loss by McDaniel, who finished with 19 points on 7-of-21 shooting.

Ohio State will look to pick up its fourth straight win next Sunday when it travels to Rutgers. The game is slated to tip off at 2 p.m. and air on Big Ten Network.