

Ohio State's Miracle Run Continues With 68-58 Win Over Michigan State In Quarterfinals Of Big Ten Tournament



Ohio State kept its dream run through the Big Ten Tournament alive, defeating fourth-seeded Michigan State 68-58 in the quarterfinals on Friday in Chicago.

Despite being without leading scorer Brice Sensabaugh, who missed Friday's contest with knee soreness, the Buckeyes (16-18, 5-15 Big Ten) got contributions from Bruce Thornton and Roddy Gayle Jr. — who led the way with 21 and 15 points respectively. Ohio State's defense also played a key part in keeping the Spartans (19-11, 11-8) at bay, as Michigan State shot just 38.2 percent (21 of 55) — including a 3 of 16 mark from three-point range — while tallying eight turnovers.

Ohio State relied on the services of redshirt senior forward Justice Sueing during the early stages of Friday's game, as Sueing tallied eight of the Buckeyes' first 10 points to push OSU to a 10-9 lead with 14:23 remaining in the opening half. Michigan State went on to miss its next seven shots, but the Buckeyes couldn't take advantage and held just a 15-11 lead with 11:15 to go in the frame.

Michigan State's offensive woes continued while the Spartans made just two of their next eight shots, and Ohio State found a groove offensively, hitting four of five shots, to open a 24-17 lead with 7:04 remaining in the half. Forward Tanner Holden made his first appearance since Feb. 16, cashing a three-pointer during the offensive stretch for the Buckeyes.

Ohio State's lead ballooned to as many as 11 points, 33-22, after Gayle connected on a corner three-pointer with 2:28 to go, but the Buckeyes were held scoreless from there. Michigan State didn't do much to cut into the lead, though, as Ohio State still carried a 33-24 advantage entering the break.

The Spartans shot just 9 of 29 from the field in the opening frame, including an 11.1 percent (1 of 9) showing from deep, while the Buckeyes countered with a 51.9 percent mark (14 of 27). Ohio State

assisted on nine of its 14 makes during the half.

Michigan State emerged during the opening stages of the second half, hitting its first four shots while cutting the deficit to two, 36-34 with 16:35 remaining in regulation. But, the Buckeyes quickly responded as Sueing and Bruce Thornton cashed three-pointers on back-to-back possessions to push the advantage back up to eight, 42-34, with 14:36 to play.

The Buckeyes' lead returned to double-digits after Thornton finished a layup in transition to push the advantage to 46-36 entering the under-12 timeout. Gayle scored Ohio State's next five points while the Buckeyes pushed their lead to 51-39, and after a bucket from Michigan State's A.J. Hoggard, Sueing added a three-pointer to lift the advantage to 13, 54-41, with 7:37 to play.

Michigan State then surged on a 9-2 run to cut the deficit to 56-50 with 4:54 to play. Gayle responded by scoring Ohio State's next seven points, including a three-pointer, to lift the Buckeyes back into the lead 63-52 with 2:01 remaining.

Ohio State was able to close out the game from there, becoming the first No. 13 seed to make the semifinals of the Big Ten Tournament.

Thornton and Sueing's offensive efforts helped the Buckeyes stake out a 44.6 percent mark (25 of 56) from the field. Thornton also led Ohio State's playmaking efforts, dishing out six of the Buckeyes' 15 assists, while Sueing added 14 points and two assists.

Michigan State was led by forward Joey Hauser, who produced a team-high 15 points while hitting all eight of his free throw attempts. Walker, Hoggard and Akins each added 10 points, respectively.

Ohio State advances to the semifinals where it will meet top-seeded Purdue at 1 p.m. on Saturday at the United Center. The game will be televised on CBS.