

# Thornton, Buckeyes Cruise To Fifth-Straight Win, Blowout Central Michigan 88-61



Ohio State cruised to its fifth-straight win Wednesday night at Value City Arena, using a dominating first-half from Bruce Thornton and a strong overall defensive showing to defeat Central Michigan 88-61.

The sophomore guard turned in another masterful performance with 25 points on 9-of-14 shooting, including 19 in the first half alone. He helped the Buckeyes shoot 55.6 percent from the field in the first half and reach at least 80 points for the third-straight game.

Ohio State got things rolling early on, connecting on three of its first four baskets to break out to an early 7-2 lead, a run that was capped by a three-pointer from Thornton with 17:11 remaining. But the Chippewas fired back with a quick 5-2 run of their own to cut the lead to just 9-7 following a made jumper by graduate guard Brian Taylor at the 14:20 minute mark.

The Buckeyes offense seemed to stall midway through the half, allowing Central Michigan to hang in the game and eventually take a 12-11 lead with 12:40 left after a three-point make from Chippewas forward Jemal Davis. This momentum quickly evaporated due to the talents of Thornton, however, who put the team on his back with a personal 7-0 run in 3:08 to hold a 18-12 advantage, a lead that was inflated to 20-12 after two made free throws from forward Jamison Battle.

Central Michigan refused to go away, though. Thanks to four-straight makes from guards Paul McMillan IV, Taylor, Jemal Davis and Cayden Vaska, the team embarked on a strong 9-2 run that cut the deficit down to just 22-21 with 6:35 left in the half. But that was the closest the Chippewas got for the rest of the game, as the Thornton show only continued.

The standout sophomore racked up another seven straight points, a sequence of events that was capped by his third three-pointer of the night which forced a Central Michigan timeout and extended the Buckeyes' lead to 29-21. That run soon extended to 15-0 thanks to four straight points from Felix Okpara, two Dale Bonner free throws and another Okpara made basket, putting the Buckeyes up front

by a comfortable 16 points with 2:59 left in the half.

The Chippewas did claw back again with a strong end to the half, outscoring the Buckeyes 8-4 in the 2:45 and ending the half on a three-point make from Taylor to trim the deficit to 41-29. But Ohio State still held a comfortable lead, mostly due to its sharp shooting. They connected on 15 of their 27 shots (55.6 percent) in the first half, with seven of those makes coming by way of Thornton. The team also dominated in the paint, recording 22 points in the paint, with 10 of them coming from Okpara.

The Buckeyes started their second half much like they did the first, accounting for the frame's first nine points to inflate the lead to 50-29, with all of those points coming from Thornton and fellow sophomore guard Roddy Gayle Jr. After Central Michigan guard Anthony Pritchard connected on a three-point make, Ohio State took off again with 11 straight points to hold a 30-point advantage with 12:18 left in the game, a sequence that was sparked by five straight points from Gayle, a three-pointer from freshman forward Devin Royal, and three combined free-throws from Gayle and Bonner.

The Chippewas tried to get back in the game with a few Ohio State starters out of the game, going on an extended 26-13 run in over seven minutes of action to trim the deficit to 74-57 with 4:31 remaining. But that momentum was finally squashed by a three point basket by Battle, which jump started a quick 7-0 run that put back in Ohio State's favor, allowing the team to cruise the rest of the way for a 27-point victory.

The Buckeyes were led in the victory by Thornton, who scored 20 or more points for the third time this season. He also contributed eight rebounds and two assists. Okpara had a career-high 14 points and a team-high eight rebounds, while Battle (12), Gayle (11) and Royal (11) also reached double figures in scoring. Central Michigan was led in the loss by Davis, who earned 15 points on 4-of-7 shooting.

The Buckeyes will look to extend their winning streak to six when they welcome Minnesota to Value City Arena on Sunday in what is the team's first Big Ten game of the season. The game is slated to tip off at 6:30 p.m. and air on Big Ten Network.