

Comeback Attempt Falls Short As Buckeyes Drop Third Straight In 65-60 Loss To Wisconsin



Ohio State whittled an 18-point second-half deficit to as little as two, but couldn't get over the hump as Wisconsin downed the Buckeyes 65-60 on Thursday at Value City Arena, handing OSU its third-straight loss and eighth in its last nine games.

The Buckeyes (11-11, 3-8 Big Ten) gave the Badgers (13-8, 5-6) all they could handle down the stretch despite losing the services of head coach Chris Holtmann, who was ejected late in the first half after picking up a pair of technical fouls. Ohio State outscored Wisconsin 33-22 in the second half and held the Badgers without a field goal across the game's final 7:18, but the Badgers did just enough to come out with the win.

Wisconsin scored the game's first eight points, but Ohio State freshman forward Brice Sensabaugh responded with an 8-0 run of his own to knot the game up with 16:13 remaining in the first half. Forward Steven Cowl scored seven of Wisconsin's next nine points while helping the Badgers open a 17-11 lead heading into the under-12 timeout.

A jumper from guard Bruce Thornton cut Wisconsin's lead to 21-16 with 10:30 to play in the half, but the Badgers exploded on a 12-2 run — sparked by 10 points from guards Connor Essegian and Chucky Hepburn — to lift their advantage to 33-18 with 4:06 remaining in the frame. The run coincided with scoring droughts from Ohio State that spanned 3:31 and 3:08 of game action.

Ohio State responded with a 9-2 run, cutting the deficit to 35-27 with 1:18 left in the half. But, the hits kept coming for the Buckeyes after Holtmann was ejected for arguing a charging call on Justice Sueing, picking up a pair of technical fouls with 27 seconds remaining in the frame. It was Holtmann's first ejection since Feb. 25, 2021, when the Buckeyes fell to Michigan State 71-65.

The Badgers finished the half on an 8-0 run — largely aided by four makes from the charity stripe by Essegian, as a result of Holtmann's technical fouls — to take a 43-27 advantage into the locker room.

Wisconsin entered the game shooting 39.4 percent across their last seven contests, but shot 51.6 percent during the first half against the Buckeyes. The Badgers also connected on 5 of their 13 three-point attempts in the frame. On the flip side, the Buckeyes shot just 42.3 percent in the opening half and turned the ball over 11 times during the stanza.

Ohio State started the second half by hitting six of its first 12 attempts from the field, but struggled to string together stops, allowing the Badgers to hold a 54-41 advantage with 11:34 remaining in regulation. The Wisconsin lead grew to as much as 16, but a pair of layups from forward Zed Key helped the Buckeyes whittle the deficit down to 57-47 with 8:59 left.

Wisconsin pushed the lead back to 15, but the Buckeyes utilized a 9-0 run to make it 62-56 heading into the under-4 timeout. Ohio State extended the run to 13-0 and closed the gap to 62-60 with 30.0 seconds left, but a missed free throw by Sueing and a pair of makes from Hepburn at the line, lifted Wisconsin's lead back up to four with 24.2 seconds left.

Key led the way during the Buckeyes' comeback attempt, dropping 9 of his 12 points during the second half. Sensabaugh dropped a team-high 13 points, hitting on 5 of 7 attempts from the field, despite fouling out with 9:20 remaining in regulation.

Wisconsin was carried by four double-digit scorers, but was led by Essegian's 17 points. Crawl added 14 while Hepburn and Max Klesmit each produced 15 and 12 respectively. The Badgers shot 41.8 percent as a team.

Ohio State heads back on the road Sunday, traveling to Ann Arbor, Mich., to take on the struggling Wolverines at the Crisler Center with tip-off set for 1 p.m. on CBS.