

Comeback Attempt Falls Short As Ohio State Loses To Michigan State 84-78 In Regular Season Finale



Ohio State closed the regular season with a loss as Michigan State used a hot shooting performance to down the Buckeyes 84-78 on Saturday at the Breslin Center.

Michigan State (19-11, 11-8 Big Ten) had five players finish with double-digit scoring while shooting 54.7 percent (29 of 53) — including an 12-of-20 mark from three. Ohio State (13-18, 5-15 Big Ten) cut a 12-point second-half lead to as little as three, but the Buckeyes couldn't string together the necessary stops to get over the hump.

Justice Sueing finished a layup on Ohio State's first field goal attempt, but the Buckeyes missed their next nine shots while Michigan State opened a 17-4 lead with 13:41 remaining in the first half. Center Felix Okpara ended a 6:54 scoring drought with a hook shot out of the post, and guards Bruce Thornton and Isaac Likekele connected on three-pointers on back-to-back possessions, but triples from Tyson Walker and A.J. Hoggard kept Michigan State up by double digits, 22-12, with 9:35 left in the half.

Forward Joey Hauser extended Michigan State's lead to 11, 25-14, with a three-pointer but the Buckeyes countered with a 7-0 run — capped off by a three-pointer from Sean McNeil — to make it a four-point game with 6:39 remaining in the half. Malik Hall and Jaden Akins scored Michigan State's next 11 points, pushing the Spartans' advantage back up to double digits, 36-26, with 3:15 left.

Thornton and Brice Sensabaugh scored Ohio State's final 11 points of the half, but Michigan State still brought a 43-34 lead into the break. The Spartans shot a red-hot 56.7 percent (17 of 30) from the field — including an 8-of-14 mark from beyond the arc — while the Buckeyes lagged behind with 44.4 percent (12 of 27) shooting. Michigan State sped past the Buckeyes, scoring 17 fast break points in the frame.

After Hoggard extended the lead with a layup to start the second half, Ohio State connected on its first four shots — including a pair of threes from Sensabaugh — to cut the deficit to 50-44 with 17:16 left in the contest. Thornton tried to keep the Ohio State offense afloat by scoring the Buckeyes next five points, but Michigan State increased its lead to 61-49 with 11:55 to play.

McNeil sunk a pair of triples, but Michigan State responded to both and kept the advantage at 10, 67-57, with 7:29 left in the contest. Ohio State then surged on a 7-0 run — capped off by a three-pointer from Thornton — to pull within three and prompt Michigan State head coach Tom Izzo to burn a timeout with 5:40 remaining in the game.

Michigan State quickly pushed its lead back up to eight with 2:47 left after a pair of layups from Walker and Hauser — as well as two free throws from Hoggard. Michigan State remained afloat at the free throw line, as Hoggard and Hauser hit three from the charity stripe, and Hoggard added a layup to keep the Spartans in front 78-71 with a little over a minute to play.

The Spartans finished the game at the free throw line, keeping the Buckeyes' second-half comeback attempt at bay.

Thornton and Sensabaugh led the Buckeyes with 20 and 21 points, respectively, while Thornton connected on 4 of 8 attempts from three-point range. McNeil scored 8 of his 11 points in the second half to assist in the comeback attempt. Ohio State assisted on 15 of its 28 makes — led by a career-high seven assists from Sueing.

Michigan State was led by 23 points from Hoggard while Hauser and Walker added 16 and 15 respectively. Akins and Hall also finished in double figures, scoring 13 and 10.