

Early 19-0 Run Launches Ohio State To Statement Win In Big Ten Tournament



For the past three games, Ohio State has won by 21 points, a margin of victory the Buckeyes had only reached four times through their first 28 games.

But this most recent 21-point win on Friday, an 87-66 win against No. 19 Iowa, the three seed in the Big Ten tournament, was the most stunning, and gave Ohio State one of its strongest wins of the season.

It all started when Kierstan Bell entered the game.

Bell, the Big Ten All-Freshman Team guard, was subbed in for Ohio State just 2:17 into the game because of a foul by sophomore forward Aaliyah Patty.

"I liked the matchup with Kierstan at the four," head coach Kevin McGuff said, "so I got her in there quickly and she obviously gave us a massive spark."

On Bell's first six offensive possessions, she scored eight points and dished out two assists, participating in the first 12 points of what became a 19-0 run that the Buckeyes would never come close to giving up.

"It was just the energy, we brought great energy out, and that's why we started off so well," Bell said. "I'm proud of the team, and I think that was just the main thing, just the energy, when you bring in good energy and you playing very well, executing, we played great defense, and that was just that was the big thing right there."

That energy the team brought into the game carried out through the second and third quarters, times where it was expected that Iowa would start to cut into the early lead with the strong shooting it has had all season long.

Instead, the lead increased from 15 to 17 points in the second quarter. And, even after the opportunity to regroup during halftime, the Hawkeyes had no answers.

"I think we were just really working together," junior guard Braxtin Miller said. "We were excited, we were hyped, we wanted it. And I don't think we were going to be denied."

“Obviously, it was good that we were making shots, and we were able to knock them down. But I think that we were going to be fighting even if the shots weren’t falling.”

Ohio State’s 17-point halftime lead ballooned to a 29-point lead after three quarters, with the Buckeyes outscoring the Hawkeyes 25-13 in the frame. Ohio State shot 10 of 18 in the quarter, while Iowa shot just 4 of 18.

“Just that we have to want it more we have to be able to be ready and prepared to go out there and know that they’re gonna make some runs and maybe punch us in the face at times and we have to punch back harder,” Miller said on what was talked about at halftime. “Just knowing that even though we are a little fatigued, we’re going to have to fight through because of how bad we want it.”

The Buckeyes started out on fire and continued to burn down Iowa’s chances until it was too late for the Hawkeyes to make a real run. It was an effort that gave a team with four freshmen, three sophomores and a junior in the active rotation a third win against a current Top 25 team.

It was a statement upset victory that showed this recent stretch of strong play has been more than a fluke, and sophomore forward Dorka Juhasz said it was clear from the beginning that this inexperienced, underdog group was ready to show something.

“I felt this energy before the game,” Juhasz said. “We were ready to come out. And obviously, we know that we have a lot to prove since we’re so young and obviously everybody favored Iowa against us. So just being able to win by like 20 is amazing.

“I’m really proud of our energy and I believe that we’ll need this tomorrow, too.”

The first quarter 19-0 run completely stumped one of the top teams in the conference, with Iowa never again coming within less than 12 points of the lead.

It also proved that the Buckeyes’ recent hot streak was far from over, and now the youngest team in the conference is just one game away, a battle against Michigan at 9 p.m. Saturday, from a spot in the Big Ten tournament final.

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