

Hot Start And End Make Up For Rough Middle In Ohio State's Win Over Minnesota



Much like how Ohio State's season has been filled with up and downs, the Buckeyes had a rollercoaster of a game during a Big Ten tournament win over Minnesota.

When looking at the final score, it all looks so simple: Ohio State cruised to a 21-point victory against a lesser opponent.

But, after splitting the game into segments, there was plenty more than just another easy win.

"I feel like we had a really great start," sophomore forward Dorka Juhasz said. "In the second quarter, we started missing some shots and I think our confidence just maybe dropped a little bit.

"That really influenced our defense, so they got many easy layups. But overall, we came back in the fourth quarter made made a really big push, but we have to be consistent with offense and defense for 40 minutes."

Ohio State's Big Ten Tournament Game Vs. Minnesota				
	Opening 8:44	Final 8:38	Combined First/Last 18:22	The Other 21:38
Shooting Percentage	62.7% (9 of 17)	62.7% (9 of 17)	62.7% (18 of 34)	34.3% (13 of 38)
Opponent Shooting %	15.4% (2 of 13)	30% (3 of 10)	21.7% (5 of 23)	38.8% (15 of 39)
Turnovers	3	1	4	7
Opponent Turnovers	6	16	16	6
Scoring Margin	23-6 (+17)	23-6 (+17)	48-12 (+34)	44-31 (+13)

Ohio State started out the game dominating as expect, and maybe even more so.

The Buckeyes hit on just over half of their shots while completely stifling the Gophers on the other end

of the floor on the way to a 17-point advantage.

The same story can be said for almost the entirety of the fourth quarter, when Ohio State shut down Minnesota once again, and managed to turn a four-point game into a blowout, again with the exact same 17-point margin.

The first positive span was led by freshman guard Madison Greene, who had seven of her nine points in the opening 23-6 run. The closing 23-6 run was led by a different freshman guard, Jacy Sheldon, who also added seven points to go with her 15 on the night.

"I think we missed a couple shots in the first half we usually make, all of us, and I think that we let that affect us on defense," Sheldon said. "But we definitely came back strong, and that's really important. And even though we were tired, we kept pushing."

For nearly half the game, the Buckeyes completely held Minnesota in check, outscoring the Gophers by 34 and holding their opponent to sub-25 percent shooting while forcing nearly a turnover a minute.

But Ohio State didn't just play 18:22 of a game, and that other 21:38 will be the key area of focus in the quarterfinals matchup against Iowa, as well as for the remainder of the team's postseason play.

In this stretch, the Buckeyes were outshot, turned the ball over more and were outplayed to the point of a double-digit scoring margin against them. But Ohio State did not waiver, staying ahead for the entirety of the game and eventually finding the late spark to get the 21-point win.

"I think we had him in the beginning, but they started getting their confidence back a little bit in the second quarter a little bit after halftime," sophomore forward Aaliyah Patty said. "I just thought if we played solid defense, stayed in the gaps, did what we were supposed to do, I think we really were able to pull it out."

"I just thought if we continue to play our game, it was it would be easy for us."

While the offense struggled in the second and third quarters, the relative constant for the Buckeyes was their defense, which still held Minnesota under 40 percent shooting even when the Gophers were outscoring Ohio State by 12, and led to a 20-6 margin in fast break points overall in favor of the Buckeyes.

"Honestly, our defense," sophomore guard Janai Crooms said on what was the cause of the eventual victory. "I thought we were in the gaps, I thought we kept our man in front of us, and I thought that really transitioned into getting the ball in transition on the offensive end."

Ohio State's challenges only increase moving forward with a battle against the Hawkeyes and the incoming NCAA tournament, and playing like the Buckeyes did for 45.9 percent of the Minnesota game instead of the other 54.1 percent may be the key for this team to make a postseason push.

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