

Mikulášiková, Taylor Leads No. 5 Ohio State Past Foul Trouble In 86-71 Win At Michigan State



No. 5 Ohio State (21-3, 12-1 Big Ten) cruised to a 86-71 win at Michigan State (17-7, 7-6) on Sunday to extend its winning streak to 11 games despite several key players relegated to the bench in the contest that saw 35 fouls between the Buckeyes and the Spartans.

Fifth-year guard Celeste Taylor and forward Rebeka Mikulášiková were the keys for Ohio State, combining for 39 points on 17-of-27 shooting in the win as Cotie McMahon, Jacy Sheldon and Taylor Thierry were relegated to the bench for much of the first half. But despite playing short-handed, the Buckeyes were able to go up 53-31 at the end of the first half after outscoring the Spartans 27-12 in the second quarter.

Thierry set a physical tone for the game early, fighting through contact and a foul for a basket on Ohio State's first possession of the contest. After a layup from Sheldon a couple of minutes later, Taylor then took over for the Buckeyes, scoring the team's next 10 points as Ohio State held a 15-13 lead with 3:31 left in the first quarter.

Ohio State and Michigan State then traded three-pointers, after which McMahon was called for her second foul of the game and also received a technical foul, giving her three and sending her to the bench for the rest of the first half. The Buckeyes persisted without McMahon, however, outscoring the Spartans 8-3 over the final 1:19 - a stretch that saw Sheldon also pick up her second foul - to lead 26-19 entering the second frame.

The Buckeyes scored on four consecutive possessions out of the break, using baskets from Sheldon, Taylor and Mikulášiková to go up 34-19 with 7:46 left in the half, but Michigan State then used a 9-4 run to cut the deficit to 38-28.

Ohio State, with McMahon, Sheldon and Thierry on the bench with foul trouble, responded with an 11-0 run - featuring triples from guards Emma Shumate and Rikki Harris off the bench - to lead 49-28 with 2:04 left, and eventually led 53-31 going into the half. Taylor had 16 points on 6-of-9 shooting while the Spartans had 11 turnovers that resulted in 19 points for Ohio State.

The Buckeyes - with McMahon, Sheldon and Thierry all back on the court - carried that momentum into the second half, opening the third quarter on a 10-1 run to lead 63-32 with 7:04 left in the frame. Michigan State scored the next three baskets, but Sheldon answered with a second-chance three-pointer, and added another triple just a minute-and-a-half later to put the Buckeyes up 71-40. Mikulášiková connected on a pair of baskets in the final three minutes to send Ohio State to the fourth with a 75-47 lead.

McMahon, Taylor and Thierry added some insurance baskets early in the fourth to go up 86-57 before Ohio State cleared the benches, with eight players scoring in the contest.

Taylor led the Buckeyes with 20 points while Mikulášiková added 19 points and Sheldon finished with 18 points in 25 minutes on the floor. The Spartans were led by guard Theron Hallock with 12 points. Ohio State shot 57.6 percent (34 of 59) from the floor and 57.1 percent (8 of 14) from deep, while Michigan State shot just 43.4 percent (23 of 53) from the field and 35.3 percent (6 of 17) from three.

Ohio State - which took sole lead of first place in the Big Ten as a result of Iowa's loss to Nebraska earlier in the afternoon - will return to the floor on Wednesday, set to host Nebraska for a 7 p.m. tip on Peacock.