

No. 11 Ohio State Women's Basketball Falls Short Of History, Loses To No. 22 Northwestern 69-57



It was a defensive battle from start to finish in Ohio State's fourth consecutive matchup against a ranked opponent.

And, with a chance to make program history with a fourth straight win against ranked teams, the Buckeyes fell short, losing on the road to Northwestern 69-57.

"It was very frustrating," junior forward Dorca Juhasz said. "It was obviously very disappointing that, just by looking back at the past games, we did such a good job working hard and playing hard for each other, and this game it was just very off, and obviously they took advantage of that."

The Buckeyes trailed 51-46 after three quarters of play, clinging to life thanks to some strong defense and an eight-point third quarter by sophomore forward Rebeka Mikulasikova.

Ohio State eventually cut the deficit to just one, 51-50, after an and-one by junior forward Aaliyah Patty with 7:30 to go. But the Buckeyes did not score again for the next 3:19 until Patty hit two more free throws, this time bringing the deficit down to 55-52.

But a 9-3 run by the Wildcats from there helped to seal the game and drop Ohio State to 10-2 on the season and 5-2 in the Big Ten.

Junior guard Veronica Burton was the difference-maker for Northwestern, finishing with a near triple-double: 20 points, 15 rebounds and nine assists, while shooting 5 of 11 from the field.

"We had a hard time keeping her in front, she's really quick and aggressive driving the basket, so we didn't guard the ball as well as we should have," Ohio State head coach Kevin McGuff said. "She really killed us tonight."

Juhasz was the top player for the Buckeyes, ending the night with a double-double of 11 points and 14 rebounds, though she only shot 4 of 12 from the field and 2 of 9 from the free-throw line.

It was an ugly start to the game for Ohio State, scoring just eight points in the first quarter and

shooting just 20 percent (3 of 15) from the field, falling behind 15-8.

“Their defense was really good, but I think our biggest issue was we didn’t start the game with the focus and energy that we’ve been playing with,” McGuff said. “We spotted Northwestern such a big lead, and you can’t do that against a good team like them on the road.”

Juhasz agreed with her head coach, pointing to the effort and energy from the Buckeyes instead of the defensive prowess of the Wildcats.

“I don’t think our offense was the main problem,” Juhasz said. “I think our energy, our defense, just the way we started the game, it’s not acceptable, and we knew that starting the game like that against a great team that is a very aggressive defense, they’re going to score, they’re going to start very strong.”

It only got worse to begin the second quarter, not making a basket until there was 4:32 remaining in the half. That, combined with a 5:14 spell without a field goal to end the first, meant that the Buckeyes went a whopping 10:42 without a make from the field, going down 28-11 in the process.

On the night, Ohio State shot just 28.6 percent (18 of 63) from the field and 29.4 percent (5 of 17) from three.

But, after a Juhasz and-one to end the cold streak, Ohio State ended the first half strong, going on a 14-4 run to bring the deficit back to seven points at the break.

Burton was huge for the Wildcats early, finishing the first half with 10 points, nine rebounds and six assists, all of which were game highs at that point.

Northwestern shot 43.1 percent (25 of 58) overall and just 8.3 percent (1 of 12) from deep, not impressive numbers, but enough to take the victory thanks to Ohio State’s offensive struggles.

Turnovers were an issue for both teams, with Ohio State and Northwestern committing 16 apiece. The Buckeyes outscored the Wildcats 16-13 on points off turnovers.

Next up, Ohio State will take on Iowa at home on Thursday. The Buckeyes took down the Hawkeyes 84-82 in overtime back on Jan. 13, and will look for a bounce-back win in Columbus after a rough showing in Evanston, Ill.

“This is 100 percent on us,” Juhasz said of the loss. “I mean Northwestern is a great team, but I think we would have played a better game if we were more focused and just together and just, defensively, as aggressive as they were.”

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