

No. 13 Ohio State Looking To Return To Win Column Against Penn State



After a blowout loss to No. 2 Indiana on Monday, dropping No. 13 Ohio State to 21-5 on the season after a 19-0 start, the Buckeyes are looking to get back to their winning ways as the regular season comes to a close.

Ohio State was outplayed in nearly every facet of the game against the Hoosiers, shooting just 45.6 percent from the field compared to 59.6 percent for Indiana while being outrebounded 35-23. The Buckeyes also had few contributions from the bench, with all of their points in the 83-59 loss coming from the starting five.

"It was tough. But as I told them, nobody's going to feel sorry for us. We better toughen. up and figure out ways to win," Ohio State head coach Kevin McGuff said. "Right now, we're in a little bit of — not in any selfish way in terms of, 'Hey, I'm going to score a bunch of points,' but something goes wrong and we have individuals on both ends trying to make plays rather than staying together in our system and it's exposing us a little bit."

Finding a way to win begins on Thursday, when Ohio State travels to face Penn State. The Nittany Lions sit with a 13-12 record this season and just a 4-10 mark in Big Ten play, but they still boast an offense scoring 72.7 points per game on 43.3 percent shooting, both of which rank among the top 100 in the nation.

Penn State is led by sophomore guard Makenna Marisa, who is averaging 18.0 points, 4.4 assists and 4.3 rebounds per game on 39.1 percent shooting. Marisa broke out last season for the Nittany Lions and has continued to improve her game, presenting a difficult challenge for Ohio State.

She's reached double digits in all but four games this season and has eclipsed the 20-point mark on 11 occasions, including a pair of 30-point outings.

Penn State also has another pair of double-digit scores in guards Shay Ciezki (11.3 points on 42.8 percent shooting) and Leilani Kapinus, who is adding 10.9 points, 6.4 rebounds, 2.7 assists and 3.4 steals per game for the Nittany Lions. Kapinus is just one part of Penn State's defensive effort that results in 12.1 steals per game, which ranks fourth in the country.

Ohio State won the lone matchup last season between the teams, but it could be a challenge this time around as the Buckeyes' starting lineup remains in flux. Guard Jacy Sheldon and forward Rebeka Mikulášiková both remain day-to-day with leg injuries after missing the loss to Indiana, so it will be a close call if either take the court against Penn State.

"With Rebeka, I was cautiously optimistic she'd be able to plays tonight, but at the last minute (she) wasn't able to," McGuff said after the loss to Indiana. "With Jacy, once again, she hasn't done anything more to herself, but just getting her whole body ready to get out there and play the way she wants to play and is capable of playing. I'm watching her moving around in practice - she's doing well, but she's not ready yet."

Ohio State will tip off at Penn State at 7 p.m., with the game set to be broadcast on Big Ten Plus.