

No. 16 Ohio State Earns First Road Win With Lopsided 78-55 Victory Over Illinois



Ohio State women's basketball moved to 6-0 and 2-0 in the Big Ten with relative ease, taking down Illinois 78-55 in the team's first road game of the season.

The Buckeyes led by 10 after one quarter and by 15 at halftime, but the Fighting Illini made their fight happen at the start of the third quarter. After a buzzer-beater three by Solape Amusan to end the first half, Illinois built on that to go on a 10-0 run and cut the deficit to 38-30.

But the game never got closer from there, with Ohio State going on a 22-2 run to take a 60-32 advantage late in the third quarter and never led by less than 19 points the rest of the way.

"I thought we were very lethargic coming out of the half and didn't get off to a good start," Ohio State head coach Kevin McGuff said. "I think one of the keys to taking back control of the game was we started to press a little bit, and we turned them over, we were able to turn those turnovers into points."

Both teams struggled with turning over the ball, with Ohio State finishing with 15 turnovers, still far less than the 25 by Illinois. The Buckeyes outscored the Illini 29-16 on points off turnovers.

Once again, the Buckeyes were without Rikki Harris, Dorka Juhasz and Rebeka Mikulasikova, and once again, sophomore guard Jacy Sheldon stepped up, finishing with 20 points and with a career-high four three-point makes on nine attempts.

"She's really talented, she works incredibly hard on her game," McGuff said. "It's not by accident that she puts up these type of numbers, and I think she's also just a really good fit in our system."

Junior forward Aaliyah Patty also made a big impact against the Illini, racking up 18 points and 11 rebounds on 8-of-15 shooting in 31 minutes of play.

"They're two big key players on our team, so I know I have to step up and help them out," Patty said about playing without Juhasz and Mikulasikova in the lineup. "Definitely miss them being on the floor, so we're excited to get them back soon."

Patty and Sheldon were the lone scorers in the first quarter that saw Ohio State take an early 18-8 lead. Sheldon led all scorers with 11 points, while Patty added seven of her own, though the third-year

forward was unaware all the team's scoring was coming from two players.

"I had no idea, no clue," Patty said. "Just finding an open area, calling for the ball, just putting the ball in the hole and doing what we had to do for our team."

In the second quarter, it was freshman forward Gabby Hutcherson who stepped up with seven points on 3-of-4 shooting. She finished with 12 points in 25 minutes.

"I felt like I had came out a little bit slow in the first quarter," Hutcherson said. "I just mentally told myself that I had to step it up, especially if we wanted to keep the lead as big as did and increase it."

On the night, Ohio State shot 29 of 64 (45.3 percent) from the field and 10 of 25 (40.0 percent) from three while holding Illinois to 20 of 58 (34.5 percent) overall and 5 of 19 (26.3 percent) from deep.

The Illini were led by two key contributors in Kennedi Myles and Jeanae Terry. Myles finished with a team-high 15 points and eight rebounds, while Terry added 12 points and a team-high 10 rebounds.

Ohio State's game Sunday against Rutgers has been postponed due to COVID-19 issues within the Scarlet Knights program. The team's next game, then, is a 4 p.m. road matchup against Iowa on Jan. 13, who is 8-1 on the season and presents the Buckeyes' toughest test to date.

But on the team's performance to this point, Patty said the team chemistry is incredibly high as Ohio State continues on its undefeated start, despite the multiple unexpected ups and downs early on due to COVID-19.

"I think we just all come together, like we've faced so much adversity, but it's just coming together as a team, playing for each other," Patty said. "We want to win, we want to keep fighting, we just want to keep going hard for each other."

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