

No. 2 Ohio State Clinches Outright Big Ten Regular-Season Championship With 67-51 Win Over Michigan



No. 2 Ohio State (25-3, 16-1 Big Ten) secured the outright Big Ten regular-season championship on Wednesday with a 67-51 win over Michigan (17-12, 8-9), also avenging the team's only loss in conference play this season.

Ohio State and Michigan were tied at 22 at the half before the Buckeyes outscored the Wolverines 27-19 in the third, and forced 29 turnovers of Michigan that resulted in 30 points for Ohio State in the 16-point win. The win also extending the Buckeyes' winning streak to 15 games, a run that dates back to Jan. 5.

Ohio State and Michigan went shot for shot early, with the Buckeyes holding 9-7 lead with 6:06 left in a physical first quarter. Sophomore forward Cotie McMahon responded with a pair of scores, but her basket with 2:54 left in the frame was the last for the Buckeyes, who missed their final three attempts of the quarter but still led 13-9 due to seven turnovers by Michigan in the first 10 minutes.

The Buckeyes increased their lead to 18-9 with 6:53 left in the second after a three-pointer from Rebeka Mikulášiková and a layup from Taylor Thierry. Celeste Taylor added a layup with 5:52 left, but Michigan then took off on a 10-0 run spanning 4:17 - during which Ohio State turned it over three times and missed three shots - to take a 23-30 lead with 50 seconds left in the quarter.

Following a timeout by head coach Kevin McGuff, McMahon was able to tie the game back up. The Buckeyes did not allow the Wolverines to get a shot on their final possession, entering the locker room knotted up at 22-all. Both teams shot poorly in the first half - 38.5 percent for Ohio State and 34.6 percent for Michigan - but the Buckeyes were able to force 14 turnovers.

Ohio State increased its lead to 28-22 to begin the third, holding Michigan scoreless for the first 3:36 of the quarter. Wolverine forward Cameron Williams broke the run with a jumper, and after dueling threes

by Ohio State guard Jacy Sheldon and Michigan guard Jordan Hobbs, Sheldon hit another triple to put the Buckeyes up 34-27 with 5:00 left.

After a timeout by Michigan, McMahon and Taylor scored on back-to-back possessions – the latter a three-pointer – and forward Taiyier Parks knocked down a pair at the line to lead 41-27 with 3:32 left, a 19-5 run dating back to the beginning of the quarter. The advantage for Ohio State remained between 12 and 14 points over the remainder of the frame, and after a three-pointer from Hobbs, Sheldon collected a loose ball that she turned into a layup at the buzzer for a 49-38 lead.

Ohio State outscored Michigan 27-19 in the third and forced six turnovers, compared to just one lost ball for the Buckeyes. Much of Ohio State's scoring output was from Sheldon, who accounted for 10 points in the third on 3-of-5 shooting.

The Buckeyes then came out hot to start the fourth, making three of their first four shots to take a 55-40 lead, and a trio of free throws from McMahon and Taylor further increased the lead to 58-41 – the largest of the game – with 5:50 remaining. Michigan scored the game's next six points to make it 58-47, but Sheldon hit back with her fourth triple to push it to 61-47 with 3:43 left. The three-pointer began a game-icing 9-0 run to take a 67-47 lead with 1:46 remaining before the final seconds ticked off.

Sheldon led the Buckeyes with 22 points on 8-of-14 shooting, while McMahon had 18 points and seven rebounds. Taylor also added 12 points in the win while Laila Phelia led the Wolverines with 13 points.

Ohio State's regular season will end on Sunday, with the Buckeyes set to travel to Iowa for a 1 p.m. tip on FOX. Ohio State has already clinched the outright Big Ten regular-season championship and the top seed in the Big Ten Women's Basketball Tournament, but the Buckeyes are still looking to secure a No. 1 seed in the NCAA tournament.