

No. 23 Ohio State Rides Strong Finish To 77-63 Victory Against No. 19 Michigan



The Ohio State men's basketball team defeated Michigan 77-63 on March 1 in front of a sold out crowd of 18,809 at Value City Arena.

"Our team is built for the moment, we're built for this," junior guard C.J. Walker said. "Our coaches believe in all of us. We feel like we can play at any level with any team, so no matter if we have all 14 or nine that we have now, everybody is built for that moment."

Walker and sophomore guard Duane Washington led the Scarlet and Gray (20-9, 10-8) to victory over the Maize and Blue (18-11, 9-9), while all five starters posted double-digit scoring performances.

Walker score 15 points, dished seven assists and grabbed six rebounds, while Washington totaled 20 points, six boards and three assists.

"C.J. was great at attacking and finding lanes," Holtmann said of Walker. "His floor game has been outstanding."

After Michigan tied the game at 54 with 6:51 left, the Buckeyes outscored the Wolverines 23-9 down the stretch.

After Walker made a shot to take the lead, senior wing Andre Wesson, who scored 14 points, extended the lead to five by banking in a three-pointer, bringing the crowd to its feet.

Following his older brother's lead, junior big man Kaleb Wesson sent the sold out home fans into a frenzy with a three-pointer of his own to push the lead to 62-54 with just over five minutes left.

"They were playing good defense, fortunately we got it up on goal," Holtmann said of the banked three. "Both guys, Andre and Kaleb, played really solid games."

Wagner ended the run with a layup, but sophomore guard Luther Muhammad, who finished with 10 points, made a midrange jumper before an Austin Davis dunk cut the lead to 64-58 with 3:55 to play.

Ohio State answered with six straight points on two free throws from Muhammad and a pair of layups from Walker and Kaleb Wesson, who added 14 points and nine rebounds, with 2:19 remaining.

Wagner answered with a triple, but Kaleb Wesson drilled a three, followed by a pair of foul shots from both Muhammad and Walker before Wagner ended the game with an arbitrary three-pointer.

Overall, Ohio State shot 47.4 percent (27 of 57) from the field and 52.4 percent (11 of 21) from beyond the arc, while Michigan shot 44.6 percent (25 of 56) from the floor and 26.9 percent (7 of 26) from deep.

Walker pushed the Buckeye lead to five points to open the second half, but the visiting Wolverines fired off a 9-0 run to take a 38-34 lead with 17:32 yet to play.

Ohio State ripped off an 8-0 run in response, sparked by an and-1 by Walker and capped by a triple from Kaleb Wesson to take a 42-38 lead with 15:26 left.

Michigan cut the Ohio State lead to two twice across the next five and a half minutes, with the Buckeyes extending their lead to six points twice in that span as well. Washington knocked down two triples with a Michigan basket in between to give Ohio State a 52-46 edge with exactly 10 minutes remaining.

Wagner tied the game at 52 with back-to-back makes from beyond the arc with 8:18 left. Walker made a basket to take the lead, but Michigan tied it at 54 with a dunk by senior big man Jon Teske with 6:51 remaining.

The Big Ten rivals battled through a back-and-forth first half, with the Buckeyes leading by as many as eight points and the Wolverines in front by as many as four.

Ohio State took a 30-22 lead on a jumper from freshman forward E.J. Liddell with 4:39 left until the break, but committed two turnovers while only making one shot the rest of the half. The cold spell allowed Michigan to trail just 32-29 at the midway point.

Holtmann was happy to see his team take down its rivals from Ann Arbor, Mich.

"It's different in basketball, but it matters," Holtmann said of the rivalry. "It matters to everybody that cares about this place, to everybody that's been here. It matters to our former players, it matters to our former coaches. It matters. I'd be naive to say it didn't feel good."

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