

No. 25 Ohio State Cruises To 90-54 Victory Against Nebraska Behind Stellar Defense



The No. 25 Ohio State men's basketball team cruised to a 90-54 victory over Nebraska behind stellar defensive effort at Value City Arena on Dec. 30.

"Overall, it was a really solid performance by our guys," Ohio State head coach Chris Holtmann said. "We were able to defend them with great purpose, had really good technique, certainly made some shots, but our ball movement was exceptional. And that's what we have to continue to be."

The Buckeyes (8-2, 2-2) held visiting Nebraska (4-6, 0-3) to 28.3 percent shooting (17 of 60) and 15.2 percent on threes (5 of 33), and they forced 15 turnovers with blocked five shots.

"The biggest thing was just our coaches really wanted us to come out and set that first punch," fourth-year junior wing Justice Sueing said. "So, we made it a big emphasis for all of us, especially coming in after a loss. We wanted to come in and swing that and hit that first punch, so we could get going."

Junior wing Justin Ahrens led Ohio State with 18 points by making 6 of 9 three-pointers across 20 minutes off the bench. Freshman center Zed Key scored a career-high 14 points in just 14 minutes, while junior guard Duane Washington Jr. added 13 points.

Nebraska fourth-year junior guard Teddy Allen made a layup to cut the Buckeye deficit to 42-26 with 17:53 on the clock, but Ohio State all but put the game away with a 12-0 streak, sparked by two triples by Washington Jr. and capped by a coast-to-coast take by Sueing.

The 12-0 run was part of a dominant 28-3 stretch that spanned 8:53 and was highlighted by an alley-oop slam by senior forward Kyle Young from Washington Jr., who had three dimes.

The 28-3 extended run gave the Scarlet and Gray a 70-29 lead, which proved to be insurmountable for the Huskers, who finished the final nine minutes with a 25-20 edge in a 36-point loss.

In the first half, Allen evened the game at 13 on a three-pointer with 13:15 until halftime, but Ohio State rallied on a 15-0 spurt spanning 6:07. The early game-breaking run was sparked by hustle plays, with sophomore forward E.J. Liddell taking a charge and diving on the floor for a rebound, along with three steals and one block for the Buckeyes.

The Buckeyes' 15-point run was part of a 25-8 stretch where they held Nebraska without a field goal for the final 13:15 of the first half. Junior guard Trey McGowens ended the Huskers' field-goal drought with an and-one finish just 17 seconds into the second half.

"It was our attention to detail. It was a big emphasis this past week for practice," Sueing said of Ohio State's improved defense against Nebraska. "In the beginning, our shots might not have been falling. That's something that we know throughout the game is going to eventually start to drop for us as we continue to play, but defense is something we can always control with our effort, and how hard we play. So, as long as we keep up our end on that side of the court, we know that our offense will eventually flow in."

A massive difference in the game was Ohio State's ability to score off the Huskers' turnovers. The Buckeyes scored 21 points off 15 Nebraska giveaways, while the Huskers only scored two points off 10 Ohio State turnovers.

"We knew that Nebraska is a team that kind of likes to push the ball in transition, so if we turned the ball over, they're going to try to capitalize on that," Ahrens said. "And we had to get back faster, and I felt like we did a fairly good job getting back in transition, but we still could have been better on a couple possessions."

The Buckeyes' ball movement was vastly superior to that of the Huskers, dishing 16 assists to just three for head coach Fred Hoiberg's squad.

"We made some shots, but our ball movement had a lot to do with that," Holtmann said. "I thought we really moved the ball (well)."

Sueing scored 12 with six rebounds, and senior forward Seth Towns added 11 points in 15 minutes off the bench.

"The biggest thing for us tonight was everybody was ready to go, from starters to guys coming off the bench," said Ahrens, who scored 15 of his points in the second half. "Everybody, as soon as they got into court, they were ready to go."

Allen led the Huskers with 13 points on 3-of-9 shooting, while fourth-year junior forward Lat Mayen's seven points marked the second most for the visitors.

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