

No. 3 Ohio State Survives Late Push From Michigan State In 74-68 Win



No. 3 Ohio State (10-0, 2-0 Big Ten) overcame a late push by Michigan State (6-5, 0-2) to secure the Buckeyes' second conference win of the season, earning a 74-68 victory at home on Sunday.

The Spartans were able to cut the deficit to as little as 67-66 with 1:44 remaining in the contest, but Ohio State was able to withstand the charge and close things out at the free-throw line to hold off Michigan State.

It appeared early on that Ohio State and Michigan State might go blow-for-blow for the duration of the contest, with the teams trading the lead five times as the Buckeyes took a 14-13 lead with 5:53 remaining in the first quarter.

After a three-pointer from guard Rikki Harris to push the lead to 17-13, the teams were held scoreless for nearly two minutes before trading free throws, and Michigan State guard Gabby Elliott then connected on a triple to cut the deficit to 19-17 with 2:22 remaining. Unfortunately for the Spartans, these would be the last points of the frame as Ohio State closed on a 10-0 run to lead 29-17 at the end of the first.

Most of Ohio State's success in the first quarter came off turnovers, as the Buckeyes - whose opponents were turning the ball over 27.9 times per contest entering this game - forced 11 in the frame and turned those into 16 points. It helped to offset some loose whistles, with the Buckeyes being called for five personal fouls, and two being assessed to forward Rebeka Mikulášiková that forced her to the bench for most of the first half.

After an exciting first quarter, both teams slowed down in the second, combining to shoot 2 of 17 from the field to begin the frame. Spartan guard Kamaria McDaniel scored a layup at 9:24 in the quarter, and the next points for either team came at 6:17 off a layup from Michigan State guard Tory Ozment.

Ohio State's first points of the quarter came after a free throw from Mikulášiková at 5:39 and the Spartans took advantage, cutting the deficit to 30-25 with 4:27 remaining. But the Buckeyes' first basket of the frame - a layup from guard Taylor Miksell - helped spark a 6-0 run in a matter of just 33 seconds to push the lead back to double digits. Ohio State eventually went into the locker room up 42-32.

The teams traded runs to open the second half, with Ohio State starting the third quarter on an 8-0 run - including two triples from Mikulášiková - and Michigan State responded with a 9-0 run to cut the deficit to 50-41 with 5:37 remaining in the frame.

Overall, the Buckeyes struggled holding onto the ball in the third, turning it over eight times as the Spartans turned those into 10 points, though Ohio State still held a 59-54 lead heading into the fourth. The Spartans took a blow near the end of the third as Elliott - who led Michigan State at that point with 11 points - exited the game with an apparent leg injury.

Ohio State was held scoreless for over three minutes to begin the fourth quarter and Michigan State eventually cut the deficit to just 67-66 with 1:44 remaining off a triple from guard Matilda Ekh. Following the score, the Spartans were unable to find the basket on any of their next three possessions and were forced to foul the Buckeyes, and Mikesell were able to close things out at the foul line in the 74-68 win.

The Buckeyes were led by a career-high 21 points from Thierry on 10-of-13 shooting in addition to nine rebounds. Freshman forward Cotie McMahon had a game-high 10 rebounds, while Mikesell (16 points) and guard Madison Greene (15 points) also reached double digits. Spartan guard Moira Joiner led her team with 16 points.

Ohio State will return to the court on Friday when it hosts University of Albany at 6 p.m.