

No. 7 Ohio State Overcomes 11-Point Second-Half Deficit To Defeat No. 8 Iowa 89-85



The No. 7 Ohio State men's basketball team overcame an 11-point deficit in the second half to defeat No. 8 Iowa 89-85 at Carver-Hawkeye Arena on Feb. 4.

"I'm sure that was a fun game to watch. It was a fun game to be a part of — not as much when we were down 11, but we have an incredibly resilient bunch, as much as any group I've ever coached," Ohio State head coach Chris Holtmann said. "So, I give our players a lot of credit. This Iowa team is tremendous. They are really, really good, and Fran (McCaffrey) does a great job. They're talented, very well coached, extremely hard to guard.

"We knew they were going to make some runs; we had to be able to weather some runs and find a way to score ourselves. If you can't score against them, you're not going to beat them. Our guys play with great poise, particularly when we were down, and for that, I'm most proud."

The Buckeyes (15-4, 9-4) were led by 16-point efforts from senior forward Kyle Young, sophomore forward E.J. Liddell and junior guard Duane Washington. Fourth-year junior wing Justice Sueing added 12 points, a game-high 11 rebounds and five assists, while fifth-year senior guard C.J. Walker dished a game-high nine helpers.

"It was just fun the whole game," Young said. "Both teams were competing super hard; we knew what kind of game it was going to be coming into it. We've been prepping and putting in the work for it, so we were just happy to be out here and we were competing the best we could."

The Hawkeyes (14-5, 7-4) pushed their lead to 61-50 with 14:29 left in the game off consecutive three-pointers by junior wing Joe Wieskamp and senior center Luka Garza.

Washington came up big for the Buckeyes, capping a 7-0 spurt with a pair of three-pointers to cut the deficit to 61-57 with 13:18 to play.

"He got on a string there where he played with a lot of confidence, and it spread," Holtmann said of Washington. "It gave the rest of the group a lot of confidence — that's who Duane is. And as long as he's taking good ones, I want him hunting."

Young and his teammates felt the spark ignited by Washington when he swung the momentum back in

the Buckeyes' favor.

"As good of a team as Iowa is, you know they're going to make runs, and you know they're going to be able to score and get stops, so for us, it was just sticking with it, not getting discouraged," Young said. "We always say don't flinch, so that was big for us. And then, (Washington) hit those big threes and got us hyped us and got us right back in the game."

The Big Ten powers battled back and forth with Wieskamp putting Iowa up 66-62 on a feed from Garza with 11:50 left.

Freshman guard Eugene Brown banked in a three-pointer before Young gave Ohio State its first lead of the second half at 67-66 with 10:12 remaining.

Young threw down a powerful two-handed slam on an excellent pass by Liddell to give the Buckeyes a 71-70 edge with 8:10 on the clock.

Iowa tied the game at 75 on a three-pointer by fifth-year senior guard Jordan Bohannon from Garza, but then the Buckeyes and junior wing Justin Ahrens took over.

Following a free throw by freshman forward Zed Key, Ahrens hit his first triple to push the lead to 79-75 with 4:27 left. Iowa third-year sophomore forward Jack Nunge answered with a three of his own.

Ahrens knocked down another three-pointer to push the lead to 82-78 with 3:55 to play on a find by Walker. After Wieskamp made a free throw, Young nailed a three-pointer to push the edge to six points with 3:28 left.

Following two foul shots by Nunge, Ahrens connected on his third triple in 1:48 of play to extend the lead to 88-81 with 2:39 on the clock.

"He came in really confident," Holtmann said of Ahrens. "He came in hunting shots, and (assistant coach) Ryan Pedon put him in great positions a couple times with a couple of his calls from the bench. But give Justin credit, man, he was hunting. He just came in, and it was great to see."

The Hawkeyes did not give up at home, cutting the deficit to 88-85 on a pair of free throws by Bohannon and a layup by Nunge.

Washington knocked down one foul shot to push the lead to 89-85 with 17 seconds left, and Ohio State held on for the four-point win.

In the first half, the Buckeyes took a 10-5 lead following back-to-back triples from Liddell and Sueing just 3:53 into the game.

The largest lead Ohio State held was 20-12 when freshman forward Zed Key finished at the rim after grabbing an offensive rebound with 11:35 until halftime.

Iowa responded with a 10-0 run led by five points from Nunge to take a 22-20 lead with 10:12 until intermission.

Neither team led by more than four points from 11:18-3:30 until the Hawkeyes went up 39-34 on a Nunge triple after a nifty pass fake.

Ohio State freshman guard Meechie Johnson drilled a pair of three-pointers to regain the lead for the visiting Buckeyes at 40-39 with 1:38 until halftime.

“You look at a guy like Meechie Johnson today;” Holtmann said, “he really stemmed the tide for us a little bit when we were on our heels a little bit there at the end of the first half by just making a couple shots and then providing some defensive activity.”

The Hawkeyes ended the half with a 45-42 lead with three players scoring 11 points in Garza, Bohannon and Nunge.

Bohannon and Nunge paced Iowa with a game-high 18 points apiece, while Wieskamp added 17 points and 10 boards, and Garza posted 16 points with seven rebounds and five assists.

“We are who we are. We’re not going to stop being us,” Washington said. “I think the best part about it is we just celebrated and the first thing Coach said is ‘We got a big one on Monday.’ I mean, we strive for perfection here. We understand it’s a long season with very, very tough teams on our schedule. And for us, we’re all bought in. We’re in a really good spot here, and we’re going to keep this energy going.”

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