

Ohio State Ends Losing Stint With Shorthanded 80-68 Win Against Nebraska



The Ohio State men's basketball team ended its four-game losing streak with a 80-68 victory against Nebraska at Value City Arena on Jan. 14.

Starting guards, freshman DJ Carton and junior CJ Walker, stepped up in the absence of suspended sophomores Luther Muhammad and Duane Washington.

Walker led the Buckeyes with 18 points on 7-of-12 shooting and 2 of 3 from beyond the arc, while Carton scored 13 points with a team-high five assists and two blocks. Walker also added five rebounds, four assists and two steals in 37 minutes.

"I most definitely in a rhythm today," Walker said. "I was able to make shots today. I haven't been able to make shots in conference play so far, so today was really good for me to make some threes, get to the basket and make plays."

Walker went 1 for 6 in the first half before a 6-for-6 second half.

"I did not think he played well in the first half," Ohio State head coach Chris Holtmann said of Walker. "He really struggled, opening with tying his shoelaces there. He's an older guy, he's got to be better than that. He's got to be better at making some of the decisions he made early. And at times, he was forcing the issue with his offense too much.

"Second half, he really played well. Good defensively and let it come to him more. His play and leadership in the second half was really good."

The experienced Scarlet and Gray trio of senior wing Andre Wesson, Kaleb Wesson and Kyle Young also rose to the occasion without Muhammad and Washington.

Kaleb Wesson gave the Buckeyes a double-double performance with 13 points and 14 boards, while dishing four assists and blocking two shots. Young scored 10 points with six boards and two blocks as well.

Andre Wesson contributed 11 points, three rebounds and three assists and left the game after taking a hit to the head but later returned.

Carton opened the second half with an impressive drive into an and-1 finish before converting the foul shot for the old-fashioned three-point play. The Buckeyes never led by less than 12 for the remainder of the game.

The closest the Cornhuskers came in the second half was at the 11:54 mark when Nebraska junior guard Thorir Thorbjarnarson knocked down a triple. The Buckeyes responded with a 12-0 rally to put the game out of reach, highlighted by a putback dunk by Kaleb Wesson and eight Walker points, including two three-pointers.

"It feels good," Walker said. "It feels good to be back on the winning side and being able to make those runs that we haven't been able to make in the past four games. It just feels really good to be back on top and win."

Ohio State overcame an opening-possession backcourt violation and a 4-0 deficit thanks to Andre Wesson, who hit three unanswered three-pointers to put his team up five.

"It gave us a big jolt of confidence," Holtmann said. "I mean, a *big* jolt of confidence, because we didn't have a good couple possessions there, to say the least."

The Cornhuskers cut the Buckeyes' lead to two points, but Holtmann's squad would not be deterred in their quest for its first win since Dec. 21. Ohio State ripped off an 8-0 run with four different players scoring to push its lead to 17-7.

Nebraska and Ohio State battled back and forth until the home team led 24-15 and Kyle Young went on a 6-0 streak by himself, giving the Scarlet and Gray a 15-point lead and double the Huskers' point total.

Stifling defense and superb shooting gave the Buckeyes a 38-25 halftime advantage, shooting 53.6 percent (15 of 28) from the floor and 50 percent from beyond the arc (5 of 10) in the first frame. They shut down the Huskers through 20 minutes, holding them to 31.4 percent (11 of 35) and 11.1 percent (1 of 9) from three.

Overall, Ohio State shot 54.5 percent (30 of 55) from the field and 45.5 percent (10 of 22) from distance, while Nebraska connected on 42.4 percent (28 of 66) of field goals and 40.9 percent (9 of 22) of three-pointers.

Freshman forward E.J. Liddell pitched in 10 points off the Ohio State bench, making 3 of 5 field goals and 3 of 6 free throws. Thorbjarnarson led Nebraska with 15 points.

"What we've seen all year, same guys, we just produced better today," Wesson said. "We saw the guys were out and down, and we stepped up."

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