

Ohio State Overcomes Iowa In 73-69 Thriller In Second Round Of Big Ten Tournament



Ohio State punched its ticket to the quarterfinals of the Big Ten Tournament with a nail-biting 73-69 win over Iowa on Thursday at the United Center in Chicago.

The lead changed hands 18 times while the teams locked into eight separate ties, but Ohio State (15-18) triumphed over the Hawkeyes (19-13) behind 49.2 percent shooting (29 of 59) and solid late-game execution. Bruce Thornton led the way for the Buckeyes with 17 points on 8 of 13 shooting while adding six assists.

Thornton got things going for Ohio State, finishing a layup on the game's opening possession, but the Buckeyes missed their next four field goal attempts while Iowa built a 9-4 lead with 14:35 remaining in the first half. The Buckeyes soon found their rhythm, though, hitting their next five shots to pull in front 12-11 with 12:18 to play in the frame.

Kris Murray put the Hawkeyes back in the lead with a layup, but the Buckeyes surged on a 9-2 run — propelled by five points from Sean McNeil — to pull back in front 21-15, their largest lead of the game, with 7:48 left in the half. Iowa responded with a run of its own and regained the lead, 26-25, on the back of an 11-4 stretch.

Both offenses went silent from there, combining to score just six points across the final 3:03, while the Buckeyes took a 29-28 lead into the break. Iowa shot 50.0 percent (13 of 26) during the frame, while Ohio State lagged behind with a 44.4 percent (12 of 27) mark, but neither team could find a rhythm from deep and combined to shoot just 4 of 19 from three-point range. Thornton led the Buckeyes with nine points, while Filip Rebraca tallied 10 points for the Hawkeyes.

Murray paced Iowa early in the second half, scoring six of its first nine points in the frame while helping the Hawkeyes jump back into the lead 37-33 with 15:14 to play. McNeil scored five of Ohio State's next seven points, including a three-pointer, to lift the Buckeyes back into the lead 40-39 with 13:25 remaining.

From that point, the lead changed hands seven times until Iowa took a 51-48 lead with 9:49 remaining but McNeil quickly responded with a corner three to knot things back up at 51. The Hawkeyes, again, built some semblance of separation, pulling ahead 55-51, but a three-pointer from Justice Sueing brought the Buckeyes back within a point with 8:39 left.

Guard Roddy Gayle Jr. put his imprint on the game down the stretch, scoring seven of Ohio State's next 10 points — including the go-ahead three-pointer — to lift the Buckeyes back into the lead, 64-61, with 3:17 to play. Iowa guard Tony Perkins pulled the Hawkeyes back within one and had an opportunity to give Iowa the lead on its next possession with a trip to the free throw line, but he missed both, keeping Ohio State in front.

Sueing pushed the Ohio State lead back to four, 67-63, with a three-pointer as the shot clock expired with 1:54 to go. Payton Sandfort brought the Hawkeyes as close as two points with a pair of free throws with 20 seconds to play, but Sueing was able to close things by sinking a pair at the charity stripe with nine seconds to play.

Thornton's scoring was aided by 16 points from Sensabaugh and 14 points from Sueing. The Buckeyes assisted on 17 of their 29 buckets, while McNeil added 13 points — helped by a trio of makes from three.

Iowa was carried by a trio of double-digit scorers, as Rebraca, Murray and Perkins produced 20, 17 and 16 respectively. Rebraca's 7-of-12 mark from the field helped the Hawkeyes produce 46.4 percent shooting (26 of 56).

Ohio State moves on to face fourth-seeded Michigan State in the quarterfinals, with tip-off set for approximately 2:30 p.m. on Friday. The game will be televised on Big Ten Network.