

Ohio State Picks Up Third-Straight Loss, Falling To Minnesota 70-67



Minnesota forward Dawson Garcia scored a game-high 28 points, as Ohio State was handed its third-straight loss on Thursday, falling 70-67 to the Golden Gophers.

The Golden Gophers (7-8, 1-4 Big Ten) carried a 66-60 lead into the game's final minute, but the Buckeyes (10-6, 2-3 Big Ten) ripped off a 7-1 run to knot the game at 67 with 8.6 seconds to play thanks to a pair of free throws from Brice Sensabaugh. However, Minnesota guard Ta'Lon Cooper hit the go-ahead free throw with 1.7 seconds left to sink the Buckeyes.

Ohio State shot just 37.5 percent from the field, while the Golden Gophers countered with a 50.0 percent clip of their own. As a result of hot shooting, Minnesota controlled the contest for much of the night — leading for 34:54 of game action.

Ohio State forward Justice Sueing opened the scoring with an up-and-under bucket off of a pump fake, however, it was the only lead the Buckeyes would hold for the entire first half. Minnesota countered by scoring 11 of the game's next 15 points, taking an 11-6 lead into the under-16 timeout.

The Golden Gophers took advantage of a sluggish offensive start from the Buckeyes, who hit just two of their first 10 shots and missed several clean looks at the basket. With 12:01 to play in the first half, Minnesota freshman forward Pharrel Payne finished a layup to lift the Golden Gophers to a 19-10 advantage, their largest lead of the night.

After Payne's bucket, Garcia scored the Golden Gophers' next 12 points, keeping the Buckeyes down eight, 31-23, with 6:29 to play in the opening frame.

However, the Buckeyes found a rhythm from there. Ohio State pulled within four thanks to a jumper from Sensabaugh and a pair of free throws by Sueing. After Payne and Buckeye forward Zed Key traded buckets, Ohio State guard Sean McNeil ripped off six straight points, hitting a three-pointer and a trio

of free throws, to knot the game at 35 with 59 seconds to play in the first half.

Minnesota carried a 37-35 advantage into the locker room, as a jumper from Cooper with 39 seconds remaining in the frame set the difference. The Golden Gophers shot 55.6 percent compared to Ohio State's 35.3 percent mark from the field, however, the Buckeyes' seven first-half offensive rebounds keyed nine second-chance points for OSU, largely keeping them in the game.

Ohio State and Minnesota traded buckets for the first six minutes of the second half, and the Golden Gophers maintained a 50-48 lead with 14 minutes to play in regulation. But, Sensabaugh gave the Buckeyes their first lead since it was 2-0 by finishing a three-point play to lift OSU ahead 51-50 with 13:06 to play.

From there, Ohio State endured a 5:43 scoring drought, allowing the Golden Gophers to rip off a 10-0 run to pull back in front 60-51 with 9:01 remaining in regulation. The Buckeyes whittled the lead down to as little as six with a minute to play before exploding on their 7-1 run, taking advantage of a 5:15 field goal drought by Minnesota. But the Golden Gophers iced the game at the free-throw line, holding the Buckeyes' comeback attempt at bay.

Five Buckeyes finished with double-digit scoring and Sensabaugh led the pack, dropping 18 points on 6-of-18 shooting while adding 10 rebounds. Sueing tallied 13 points while McNeil produced 11 and Key and Thornton added 10.

Supporting Garcia was Cooper, who added 13 points, thanks in part to a pair of three-pointers, 11 rebounds and four assists. Forward Jamison Battle also gave the Golden Gophers a lift, dropping 11 points on 5-of-12 shooting.

Ohio State heads back on the road for a rematch with Rutgers — who the Buckeyes beat 67-66 thanks to a controversial buzzer-beater from Tanner Holder on Dec. 8 — on Sunday with tip-off set for 2:15 on Big Ten Network.