

Ohio State Remained Focused On Maine As Upsets Swirled Around College Basketball



On Wednesday afternoon, college basketball's biggest upset — based on point spread — in at least 30 years occurred. Iowa, a 32-point favorite, was stunned at home by 3-9 Eastern Illinois — a team that Ohio State vanquished 65-43 on Nov. 16 — 92-83, sending shockwaves across the college basketball world. The Hawkeyes' loss was indicative of a trend swirling around college basketball, as several other Power Six programs fell in buy games — including Ole Miss, Texas A&M and Oregon — on Tuesday.

Later that evening, Ohio State entered a buy game of its own, hosting a 6-5 Maine squad that was coming off a 32-point loss at the hands of Akron two nights prior. With Iowa's stunning upset loss in the mind of Ohio State head coach Chris Holtmann, he made sure to share the message to not take the Black Bears lightly prior to tip-off.

"The upsets, in a way, really help you," Holtmann said. "They grab the attention of your team in a way that is specific and really relevant because they know the teams, for the most part, that perhaps have gotten upset between (Tuesday) night and (Wednesday)."

While the threat of joining the Hawkeyes in unwelcome company loomed, Ohio State took care of business against the Black Bears, securing a 95-61 win at Value City Arena. The Buckeyes did not leave much to chance, either, leading for all but 30 seconds while shooting a scorching 61.2 percent from the field in the blowout win.

Freshman forward Brice Sensabaugh led the Buckeyes in nearly every major statistical category, including points (19), rebounds (7) and assists (7) — a career-high — while shooting a blistering 8 of 12 from the field and 60 percent from three-point range.

As Sensabaugh proved to be unfazed by the several upsets around college basketball, he noted that Holtmann and the coaching staff constantly remind the team what can happen when they let their foot off of the gas.

“There are obviously examples that coach provided to us for teams losing these buy games,” Sensabaugh said. “It’s an emphasis every day, multiple times a day. It was something that we couldn’t fall victim too.”

While Ohio State has four freshmen in its typical rotation, the fear of youth and inexperience can creep in during buy games, as teams potentially begin to look forward to more difficult matchups. However, that has not been the case for the Buckeyes, who have gone 5-0 in buy games this season, and Holtmann pointed out that all that matters is the effort that his team puts forward, regardless of the opponent.

“You don’t want your team to play in fear, but you do want there to be an awareness that it really does come down to how you play on a given night,” Holtmann said. “That’s important for young kids to remember.”