

Ohio State Rolls At Home Against Maryland, 82-67



Coming off an expected week off after inclement weather in Columbus forced Ohio State to postpone its Feb. 3 matchup with Iowa, the Buckeyes (14-5, 7-3) looked rested and prepared in hosting Maryland on Feb. 6, shredding the Terrapins (11-2, 3-9) in the early minutes of the game to generate a lead that it would never look back from on the way to an 82-67 win.

Ohio State rode a hot shooting start to a double-digit lead within the first six minutes of the game, hitting seven of its first 10 attempts from the field to claim an 18-7 lead with 13:15 to play after an E.J. Liddell free throw.

Maryland responded with a quick five points before a timeout to cut the deficit to six, but Ohio State responded in a big way, claiming its largest lead yet at 30-16 with a Kyle Young layup and a Joey Brunk hook, surrounding an oh-so-critical Justin Ahrens triple – who the Buckeyes have been desperate to get back into a groove after a month of slumping from deep. Donta Scott chipped in a quick four points for Maryland but an arching Meechie Johnson Jr. jumper and a Liddell slam gave the Buckeyes that 14-point edge with 6:49 to play in the half.

It was Ahrens again who pushed the largest lead to 15 points with his second triple of the afternoon, knocking one down on a fastbreak with just over a minute on the clock to put Ohio State ahead 42-27, giving him multiple makes from deep for the first time since he hit a pair against Indiana on Jan. 6. Maryland answered with a bucket to send both sides to their locker rooms with the scoreboard reading 42-29.

After recognizing 15 former captains – Aaron Craft earned the loudest round of applause, as expected – it was the current Buckeye veterans who led Ohio State into the final 20 minutes.

Along with a pair of Key layups, Wheeler knocked down a 3-pointer and Liddell finished a tough transition layup to extend Ohio State's lead to its largest margin yet at 51-32. Scott knocked down his

fourth 3-pointer of the game to answer, though his make did not go without a response. It didn't quite count as a made shot from deep, Ahrens drew a foul from the corner on Ohio State's following possession and hit two of three free throws, securing his largest output in the scoring department since his 16-point day against Towson on Dec. 8. He finished the game with 14 points.

Just under three minutes later, Ahrens connected from deep for the third time to quell a growing Maryland run and put the Buckeyes up 61-40.

A stretch of strong shooting for Maryland cut Ohio State's lead down to 14 points on two separate occasions at 66-52 and 69-55 but Ohio State found answers with a Liddell deep ball and a Key putback to keep the Terrapins at bay.

Maryland popped a layup in out of the under-eight-minute media timeout to extend its hot stretch hitting six of seven before the previously scorching Scott missed a 3-pointer. Eric Ayala kept Maryland's efforts on track with a banked 3-pointer (he also drew a foul but missed the free throw), though Maryland couldn't keep Liddell from a momentum killing and-one layup to put the Buckeyes back up 14 points, 74-60, with just over five minutes left in the game.

Ayala narrowly missed a shot that would have cut the deficit to just nine a few possessions later with a Scott dunk that cut the lead to 12 on the possession prior and Liddell took his opportunity, doing what Ayala couldn't and knocking down a shot from deep to put Ohio State back up by 15 into the final media timeout of the afternoon.

Maryland's final big punch was foiled by Ahrens on both ends of the court. He deflected what looked to be an easy breakaway dunk at the rim after a Wheeler turnover and then knocked down his fourth 3-pointer to push the Buckeyes lead up to 80-64. Malaki Branham capped the victory with a strong one-handed dunk, as the two sides traded barbs to run out the clock.

Liddell led Ohio State with 24 points and 11 rebounds, going blow for blow with Scott's 25 points. Key chipped in 14 points with seven boards.