

Ohio State Rolls To 5-0 With 85-46 Domination Of Purdue Fort Wayne



The Ohio State men's basketball team remained unbeaten in convincing fashion, dominating Purdue Fort Wayne, 85-46, at Value City Arena.

Junior big man Kaleb Wesson led the way for the Buckeyes, scoring 15 points and grabbing seven rebounds. Freshman guard D.J. Carton contributed 13 points on 5-of-7 shooting off the bench.

Starting guards C.J. Walker and Duane Washington Jr. played well in the Buckeye backcourt. Walker, a junior, posted 11 points, three boards, three assists and four steals, while Washington Jr., a sophomore, scored eight points and dished five dimes.

"I was just taking what the defense was giving me, being aggressive as always," Washington Jr. said. "If somebody helps up, it's a drop-off. And they're a big close-it-in team — that's what we talked about during the week. You get to the paint, all five of their guys crash the paint as well, so just finding guys, kicking it out and knowing the game plan."

Head coach Chris Holtmann was impressed by the play of Walker and even more pleased with his leadership.

"His leadership has been phenomenal from day one with this group," Holtmann said of Walker. "He struggled early, probably still will at times, getting back after sitting a year out. His leadership has been great."

After Purdue Fort Wayne fifth-year senior guard Marcus DeBerry nailed a three-pointer to cut Ohio State's lead to 9-7, the Buckeyes answered with a tone-setting run. The Scarlet and Gray scored 16 straight points, including two Washington Jr. three-pointers, and their stifling defense put them in front of the Mastodons, 25-7.

Later in the first half, Purdue Fort Wayne cut the Ohio State lead to 33-19 with a layup from sophomore guard Jarred Godfrey. The Buckeyes answered with a quick 7-0 run, capped by a layup by a Luther Muhammad that came off an Andre Wesson assist following an E.J. Liddell steal.

One of the game's most exciting plays came on a sophomore-to-freshman alley-oop. Washington Jr. tossed up a picture-perfect pass to high-flying freshman forward Alonzo Gaffney, who grabbed the lob and threw down a ferocious dunk, bringing the home crowd of 11,609 to a roar.

Ohio State led Purdue Fort Wayne, 42-25, at halftime, shooting 48.5 percent (16 of 33) from the field and 7 of 9 from the free-throw line. The Mastodons shot just 29 percent (9 of 31) from the floor in the first frame and made 3 of 5 from the charity stripe.

The Buckeyes opened the second half on a 14-3 run, highlighted by a pair of triples by both Kaleb Wesson and Walker, who added a layup as well. Purdue Fort Wayne's leading scorer Brian Patrick knocked down a triple to end the run, but Ohio State did not waver.

The Scarlet and Gray responded by ripping off a 13-0 run, highlighted by eight points from Carton in under two minutes of play, pushing the lead to 69-32.

Liddell, a freshman forward who notched eight points, five rebounds, two assists, two steals and one block, shared why Ohio State had so much success coming out of the intermission.

"They were making us shoot a lot of threes and half of our shots were threes in the first half," Liddell said of Holtmann's halftime message. "We just wanted to focus on keep touching the paint and keep playing together, and everybody's going to shine. So, that's what we did, and that's how we got off to a great start in the second half."

With the game out of reach, the Buckeyes emptied their bench. Sophomore wing Justin Ahrens, who has been battling a back injury, nailed all three of his three-point attempts, scoring nine points in eight minutes.

Overall, Ohio State shot 53.4 percent (31 of 58) from the field, 43.3 percent (13 of 30) from three-point range and 71.4 percent (10 of 14) from the foul line. On the other end, the Buckeyes held the Mastodons to 31.5 percent (17 of 54) shooting and 38.1 percent (8 of 21) from beyond the arc.

The Buckeyes were able to hold off the Mastodons by sticking to their core principles of sharing the ball and playing team defense with consistency.

"We just know that in the game of basketball there are runs," Washington Jr. said. "One team is going to make a good run and the other team is going to make a good run. So, just consistently putting it into each other's brains, 'Play the right way the whole game all the time.'"

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