

Ohio State Seniors Make Major Impact On Senior Night



Prior to tip-off of Ohio State's matchup with No. 21 Maryland on Wednesday, the Buckeyes recognized their three seniors — Justice Sueing, Isaac Likekele and Sean McNeil — and once the ball went in the air, those three made sure to leave their imprint on OSU's 73-62 upset win over the Terrapins.

Ohio State head coach Chris Holtmann opted to start the trio of departing players, and they delivered from the jump. All in all, Sueing led the Buckeyes in scoring with 16 points while Likekele and McNeil added 11 and 10, respectively, in order to close out their playing careers at Value City Arena the right way.

"One thing I asked (Likekele) was, 'Have you ever lost on Senior Night?' And he said no, I hadn't lost on Senior Night either. He had one at Oklahoma State and I had one at West Virginia, but even the Senior Nights before that," McNeil said. "This was the last one here, so we kind of came out with a different look in our eye, for sure. We wanted this one bad."

The trio of Sueing, Likekele and McNeil combined to score 19 of Ohio State's first 25 points, with freshman center Felix Okpara scoring the other six, helping the Buckeyes jump on the Terrapins early with a 25-15 lead with 7:05 to play in the first half. After the freshman duo of Brice Sensabaugh and Bruce Thornton connected on a trio of shots, McNeil added another three-pointer to send Ohio State to the locker room with a 35-29 lead over the Terrapins.

As the seniors got rolling early, head coach Chris Holtmann said he felt Sueing, Likekele and McNeil came into the game with the right mindset and that ultimately translated to the court.

"I thought they had a really good approach, and obviously for the last week and a half or two weeks, I do feel like we've played better, so maybe across the board our confidence is higher," Holtmann said. "I thought they had a look in their eye tonight."

At the half, McNeil and Likekele had combined for 19 points while connecting on all seven of their field goal attempts in the frame. Although Sueing struggled in the first half — scoring just three points on 1-of-5 shooting — he saved his best for closing time.

Sueing helped the Buckeyes keep the Terrapins at arm's length, scoring 13 of his 16 points in the second half. The longest-tenured Buckeye connected on eight free-throw attempts during the frame — leading the charge on Ohio State's 20-of-20 mark from the charity stripe — while adding a layup and three-pointer for good measure. Sueing helped Ohio State extend its lead to 15 — its largest of the night at 67-52 — with a corner three-pointer, after which he let out a roar and pointed to his family in the crowd, who had traveled all the way from Hawaii to see him play his final game at Value City Arena.

"I wanted to be able to leave the Schott and the fans on a good note and keep our momentum going into the next game and then into the (Big Ten) tournament," Sueing said. "I'm really proud of the guys. We've had some rough stretches but more importantly, we've stayed together. Been able to build on our work ethic and just our mentality going forward and we were able to get a couple of dubs and now we're gonna keep pushing forward."

Sueing helped ice the game by connecting on four key free throws, while Ohio State picked up its second consecutive win — stringing wins together for the first time since victories over Alabama A&M and Northwestern on Dec. 29 and Jan. 1.

For Holtmann, the win extended beyond the final score as, in the face of a lost season, the Buckeyes were able to provide their senior class with a victory in its final home game.

"This was a great win here for really our seniors. I thought they had a look in their eye that was tremendous and they played with great competitiveness the whole game," Holtmann said. "I thought Isaac set the tone with his defense, Justice was phenomenal all game and Sean was terrific early in his shot-making. So it's a really good Maryland team and I thought we were able to just kind of keep them at distance. But it's a really good team. A lot of respect for them."