

Ohio State Snaps Five-Game Losing Streak, Defeats Maryland 79-75 Behind Clutch Play Of Bruce Thornton



Ohio State (14-10, 4-9) needed two extra periods and a series of late-game heroics from Bruce Thornton to break its five-game losing streak Saturday afternoon at Value City Arena, defeating Maryland (13-11, 5-8) 79-75 in double overtime behind 24 points from the standout sophomore.

The Buckeyes trailed late in both regulation and the first overtime but managed to extend the game each time due to the heroics of Thornton, who connected on a three-pointer with 1:03 left to tie the game at 61, then tied the game again at 71 with a driving layup with 1:05 remaining in the extra period. Then in the second overtime, Thornton gave the Buckeyes a 77-75 lead with 1:11 left with an underhand layup, giving the Buckeyes their first victory in 21 days.

Ohio State struggled to get going on offense, going the first 4:15 without a field goal and committing two turnovers to give way to an early 8-2 Terrapins lead. The Buckeyes' first basket came by way of an Evan Mahaffey floater with 15:45 left to trail 8-4, but another sluggish offensive sequence allowed the Terrapins to extend its lead to 13-4 with 14:42 left.

Ohio State then woke up offense, connecting on four consecutive field goals — including a Bruce Thornton second-chance three — that sparked a 10-2 run and cut the Terrapins deficit to 15-14.

Maryland broke the extended run with a Jahmir Young steal and fast-break layup off an errant pass from fifth-year guard Dale Bonner, which allowed the Terrapins to create some more added breathing room and eventually extend its lead to double-digits, 28-18, with 8:02 left following a put-back layup from forward Mady Traore.

Ohio State cut the deficit to 30-24 thanks to four free throws and an Evan Mahaffey basket — the team's first field goal in 3:21. After another sluggish sequence offensively for both teams, the Buckeyes found

themselves trailing by one, 32-31 with 1:03 left off a 7-0 run, which was capped by Mahaffey's third three of the season.

The positive play continued out of a Terrapins timeout, with the Buckeyes getting a stop on the defensive end and a layup from Thornton to take a 33-32 lead into the half. Despite trailing by double-digits midway through the period, Ohio State closed the half on a 15-4 run to get back in the game. This sequence was mostly done with the Buckeyes' efforts on defense, with the team holding Maryland scoreless for the last 4:49 of play.

The second half began much like the first, with Ohio State failing to score for the first 2:25 as Maryland retook a 37-33 lead. Thornton broke the drought with a mid-range layup with 17:35 left, sparking a 5-0 run for Ohio State that put it back up 38-37.

The score stayed within one point in favor of either team until Maryland made two straight baskets to lead 46-42 with 11:37 left, but the Buckeyes answered on the ensuing possession with a Gayle three to cut the deficit 46-45.

Maryland scored the game's next five points to create a six-point cushion, leading 51-46. The Buckeyes received their first basket from fifth-year forward Jamison Battle a few possessions later to cut the deficit to 52-49 with 8:19 left, but it was followed by a triple by Young on the next possession to put momentum back in the Terrapins favor.

Ohio State responded again, scoring nine of the game's next 13 points to stay within three points of the Terrapins, trailing 60-58 with 3:49 left after a made layup from Felix Okpara. The Buckeyes had a chance to take the lead on their next offensive possession with a Battle three, but the shot rimmed out and Maryland extended its lead back to four, 60-56 on its next possession.

Ohio managed to stay within reach, though and after a turnover and a miss from Bowen Hardman, the Buckeyes tied the game at 61 with 1:03 left when a driving Gayle found Thornton in the corner for a triple. The score managed to stay the same until the end of regulation, with the two teams missing on their final possessions of the half to force overtime.

The two teams came out firing in the extra period, with the Terrapins and Buckeyes each hitting their first two shots as Ohio State held a 67-66 lead with 3:04 left. Maryland hit five of its next six free throws to go up 71-69, but Thornton tied it up again with a driving layup with 1:05 left. But that was the last points either team would get in the period.

The second overtime was much of the same, with the two teams trading baskets in the early on to keep the game tied at 75 with 1:59 left. After a Maryland miss, Thornton put the team on his back for a third time and connected on an underhand layup to put them up 77-75, and, after a Zed Key block and a thunderous Gayle dunk, the Buckeyes were able to hold on for their first win in its last six attempts.

Ohio State was led in the win by Thornton, who earned 24 points on 10-of-20 shooting along with a team-high seven rebounds and four assists. Gayle added 17 on 4-of-12 shooting, while Mahaffey had eight. Maryland was spearheaded by Young, who scored 26 points and added seven rebounds in the loss.

Ohio State will look to start a winning streak Tuesday night when they travel to Madison, Wisc., to take on the 11th-ranked Badgers. The Buckeyes have not won a road game in its last 16 tries, a losing streak

that dates back to Jan. 1, 2023.