

Ohio State Snaps Nine-Game Losing Streak With 72-60 Upset Win Over Illinois



Ohio State's long drought has finally come to an end as the Buckeyes snapped their nine-game losing streak with a 72-60 upset win over Illinois at Value City Arena on Sunday.

The Buckeyes (12-17, 4-14 Big Ten) collected their first win since Jan. 21, while the freshman duo of Bruce Thornton and Brice Sensabaugh combined for 34 points. Illinois (19-10, 10-8) shot an icy 36.1 percent (22 of 61) while the Buckeyes outrebounded the Illini 40-28 and cultivated a 46-28 scoring advantage in the paint.

Ohio State hit on five of its first six shots, three of which came from Thornton, to open up a 10-8 lead with 15:20 left in the first half. Sensabaugh took over from there, leading the Buckeyes on a 9-0 run with five points to push the Buckeyes' lead to 19-9 — their first double-digit advantage since their 93-77 win over Iowa on Jan. 21 — with 10:38 remaining in the frame.

Illinois connected on just five of its first 22 shots while the Buckeyes continued to roll offensively, and pulled ahead 26-16 with 6:41 remaining in the frame. Ohio State's lead ballooned to as much as 15, 41-26, in the first half after Sensabaugh finished a three-point play with 29 seconds remaining in the frame, but a Matthew Mayer three-pointer with three seconds to play made it 41-29 heading into the break.

Ohio State held an advantage in nearly all facets of the game during the opening half, shooting 60.7 percent while outrebounding the Illini 23-9. The Buckeyes also outscored the Illini 24-14 in the paint, while Illinois shot just 36.7 percent in the half. Thornton stole the show in the first half, producing 13 points while connecting on 6 of 7 shot attempts.

The Buckeyes hit just two of their first seven shot attempts to start the second half, while Illinois carved out a 10-3 rebounding advantage across the first 4:27 of the stanza, but Ohio State held firm with a 45-35 lead entering the under-16 timeout. That was until Illinois guard Terrance Shannon Jr. completed

three-point plays on back-to-back possessions to cut the deficit to 45-41 with 15:11 to go in regulation.

Shannon's scoring barrage was followed by a 4:01 drought from the field by the Illini, but Ohio State failed to capitalize, holding just a 49-45 lead with 11:10 remaining in the game. Ohio State connected on just two of its next nine attempts from the field, while freshman guard Jayden Epps splashed a corner three to make it a one-point game, 53-52, with 6:53 left.

However, Sensabaugh came alive at that point, throwing down an emphatic dunk in transition, which sent the contesting Mayer to the floor, before hitting a turnaround jumper and extending Ohio State's lead to 59-52 with 5:24 to play. Thornton decided it was his turn next, hitting back-to-back jumpers — including a three-point play — to push Ohio State's lead back to double-digits, 64-53, with 3:57 to play.

Ohio State hit on its last seven attempts from the field to close the game, collecting the elusive win that escaped them for more than a month.

Thornton led the way for the Buckeyes with 20 points on 8-of-11 shooting, while Sensabaugh produced 14 points. Justice Sueing also registered a double-double with 14 points and 11 rebounds, helping the Buckeyes to a 53.6 percent mark (30 of 56) from the field on Sunday.

Coleman Hawkins led the Illini in scoring with 14 points, while Mayer and Shannon added 11 and 10 respectively.

Ohio State looks to build off the win on Wednesday when it hosts Maryland at Value City Arena for Senior Night. The game is set to tip off at 7 p.m. and will be televised on Big Ten Network.