

Ohio State Wins Second Straight, Defeats Nebraska 78-69 Behind 32 Points From Jamison Battle



Ohio State (17-12, 7-11) ended its eventful month of February on a strong note, defeating Nebraska (20-9, 11-7) 78-69 Thursday night at Value City Arena behind a strong defensive outing and dominant offensive performance from fifth-year forward Jamison Battle.

The Buckeyes, playing undermanned with sophomore guard and leading scorer Bruce Thornton out with a migraine, seemed unfazed by their best player's absence, going up 39-37 at halftime and outscoring the Huskers 39-32 after the break for their second straight win. Ohio State shot just 42.6 percent from the field but received a season-high 32 points from Battle on 9-of-18 shooting. They also held Nebraska to just 38.8 percent shooting and just two points in the final 3:52, while also owning a 43-33 rebounding advantage.

While Ohio State was without the services of Thornton, the Buckeyes did return fifth-year forward Jamison Battle to the lineup after he missed the previous game against Michigan State with an ankle injury. This addition proved to be crucial for the Buckeyes early on, as Battle scored the team's first 11 points — nine of those coming from triples — to help Ohio State go up 13-6 before the first media timeout.

Nebraska settled down after the break. After Battle missed his first field goal, the Cornhuskers embarked on an extended 15-2 run — aided by a 1-for-6 shooting stretch from the Buckeyes — to take a 21-15 lead with 11:03 left. Ohio State broke the sequence with a basket from freshman forward Devin Royal, which, after a Nebraska score, was followed by freshman guard Taison Chatman's first three of his career to cut the deficit to 23-20 with 9:08 remaining.

After the two teams exchanged layups and free throws, Nebraska pushed the lead to 31-24 with consecutive baskets from forward Rienk Mast and guard Keisei Tominaga, which, after a Scotty

Middleton triple, was followed by a three on the other end from Tominaga. Ohio State stayed in the game in the ensuing minutes with three straight free throws from sophomore guard Roddy Gayle Jr., kickstarting an extended 10-1 run that gave Ohio State a 37-35 lead with 1:50 left.

The Buckeyes extended its lead to four, 39-35, with 51 seconds remaining after a Felix Okpara block led to a pair of Battle free throws, and the home team held a 39-37 advantage at halftime.

Ohio State shot just 40.7 percent from the floor (11 of 27) and 37.5 percent from three (6 of 16) but managed to lead at half by making 11 of its 12 attempts from the free-throw line. They also held a 20-16 advantage on the glass.

The Buckeyes continued to surge out of the break, scoring the first seven points of the half and forcing seven straight Husker misses to go up 46-37 with 16:16 left. Nebraska broke the run with a dunk from forward Juwan Gary and later back-to-back threes from Jamarques Lawrence to trail 50-45, but Middleton answered with a triple on the other end to go back up eight.

The two teams continued to trade blows in the middle portion of the half to keep Ohio State ahead by at least two possessions, but a two and three from Mast helped the Cornhuskers cut the deficit to 65-63 with 6:13 left. Free throws from Royal and Battle allowed the Buckeyes to extend the lead back to four, 69-65, heading into the final media timeout.

Ohio State's lead stayed at four following two Royal free throws with 3:04 left, and a driving layup from Gayle — a play that also sent the guard to the locker room with a hobbled ankle — an offensive foul by Nebraska and two Battle free throws put the home team up 75-67.

Tominaga missed a three on the other end, and Ohio State closed the win out with a Battle floater and a Gayle free throw.

Ohio State was led in the win by Battle, whose 32 points was the second-most in his career and most as a Buckeye. Gayle had a double-double with 16 points and 10 rebounds, while Royal (13 points) also reached double figures in scoring. Nebraska was led by Mast, who had a double-double with 14 points and 12 rebounds, while Lawrence also added 14.

The Buckeyes will look to get healthy over the next few days before they return to action Sunday afternoon for a nationally televised home game against struggling Michigan. The rivalry game will tip off at 4 p.m. and will be televised on CBS.