

Ohio State Women's Basketball Overcomes Big Halftime Deficit To Beat Nebraska 80-74 In OT



Ohio State trailed big to a Big Ten opponent heading into the third quarter for the second straight game.

This time, against a Nebraska team in the middle of the Big Ten, it was in a game between two bubble teams for the NCAA Tournament, and the Buckeyes again attempted to respond in the second half.

The Buckeyes did exactly that, outscoring the Cornhuskers 14-4 to open the third, holding Nebraska to 0-of-8 shooting from the field.

And after Ohio State managed to bring it all the way back to tie it heading into an extra frame, the Buckeyes finished the comeback, defeating the Cornhuskers 80-74 to move to 12-9 and 5-5 in Big Ten play.

"We really locked in there in the second half and played really hard on that end of the floor and we did a great job," Ohio State head coach Kevin McGuff said. "Great win for our team though, because we really, obviously we had plenty of chances to go away and not keep fighting, but we stayed together and we kept fighting and came away with a great win."

A Kierstan Bell make with 1:44 to go in the fourth quarter brought Ohio State within two points, 68-66, and another make from the freshman guard tied the game with just 63 seconds remaining.

Neither team scored from there to end the regulation tied at 68.

Both teams traded baskets to start overtime, and a three by senior guard Hannah Whitish put Nebraska up 73-72 with 3:18 to go. A split pair of free throws put the Cornhuskers up two, and the teams missed shots on both ends of the floor to keep the score the same deep into the extra frame.

That is when sophomore forward Aaliyah Patty hit a crucial and-one to give Ohio State a lead, 75-74 with 1:06 to go in overtime.

Freshman guard Madison Greene then forced a turnover before the Buckeyes' most veteran player hit the biggest shot of the game.

Junior guard Braxtin Miller, who stepped up with 17 points on the day, hit a crucial three to put Ohio State up four with 35.1 seconds to go.

"She played a great game. Not only was that shot huge, but she displayed great leadership throughout, great poise," McGuff said. "Really an excellent game from Braxtin."

The Buckeyes got a stop on defense, then a pair of free throws by sophomore forward Dorka Juhasz officially sealed the game, and gave Ohio State a monumental road win to add to its resume.

Despite another poor start to the game, the Buckeyes outscored Nebraska 46-25 in the second half and overtime to earn the victory.

After not attempting a free throw throughout the entirety of the first half, while the Cornhuskers hit 9 of 11 from the charity stripe, Ohio State hit seven in the third quarter to help make it a six-point game with just a quarter left to play in regulation.

The Buckeyes may have outscored Nebraska 19-10 in the third quarter, but they did not shoot well, hitting 5 of 20 attempts in the quarter. But Ohio State's defense stepped up, allowing Nebraska to hit just one of its 13 attempts from the field in the third.

Defense was the key for the Buckeyes throughout the second half, holding the Cornhuskers to 6-of-38 shooting in the final 20 minutes of regulation and overtime.

"No question," McGuff said on if defense was the key to the comeback. "Our transition defense was really bad in the first half, so we got that cleaned up, we talked about it at halftime, and then our ball-screen defense got a little bit better, and those were the biggest things in the first half that we weren't really doing well.

"Once we started doing that, now we're getting more stops and we can get in transition, but it really started with our defense for sure."

Three players finished with double-doubles for the Buckeyes: Juhasz (12 points, 13 rebounds), Patty (12 points, 12 rebounds) and Bell (16 points, 12 rebounds), the latter of which was Bell's first double-double of her collegiate career.

On the game, Ohio State shot just 33.0 percent (29 of 88) and held Nebraska to 33.3 percent shooting (23 of 69). And with a 64-49 rebounding advantage, it was enough to overcome the big halftime deficit.

"I just thought our effort and our toughness around the basket with our rebounding was really good, and that's what we need," McGuff said. "I loved seeing Kierstan get in there with 12 rebounds, I thought that was excellent.

Nebraska made five of its first seven three-point attempts and shot 60 percent (6 of 10) from deep in the first half to take a 49-34 lead in the opening 20 minutes.

After leading by just two coming into the second quarter, the Cornhuskers outscored Ohio State 24-11 in the final 10 minutes of the opening half, while the Buckeyes shot 4 of 19 in the quarter, while also

turning it over six times.

Part of that disastrous second quarter for Ohio State was a 10-0 Nebraska run that extended the Cornhusker's lead to 44-29 with 2:14 to go in the half.

Freshman forward Rebeka Mikulasikova led the way for the Buckeyes in the first half with 10 points on 4-of-7 shooting, hitting two of her three attempts from behind the arc.

Ohio State stays on the road for an 8 p.m. Thursday matchup against Illinois hoping to build on this massive comeback victory.

"We're kind of going one day at a time, but this is a huge win," McGuff said. "I have a lot of respect for Nebraska, they've got a great team and this is a really hard place to play, so great win for our team and we'll get back at it Tuesday."

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