

Penn State Outlasts Ohio State 75-71, Hand Buckeyes Ninth-Straight Loss



Jalen Pickett scored Penn State's final 14 points to carry the Nittany Lions to the finish line and hand Ohio State its ninth-straight loss 75-71 on Thursday at Value City Arena.

Penn State (17-11, 8-9 Big Ten) entered Thursday's contest in desperate need of a win to bolster its NCAA Tournament resume and picked up a huge victory, powering past Ohio State (11-17, 3-14) behind Pickett's late surge. Pickett found his rhythm in the second half, scoring 21 of his 23 points behind a 2-of-2 mark from three in the frame.

For the second-straight game, Ohio State started a quartet of freshmen, and a pair of first-year players guided the Buckeye offense early. Bruce Thornton and Brice Sensabaugh combined for 13 of Ohio State's first 15 points, but the Nittany Lions opened up a 19-16 lead with 11:37 remaining in the first half behind seven early points from senior Seth Lundy.

Sensabaugh continued his scoring barrage while lifting the Buckeyes into the lead, 24-23, with a mid-range jumper with 8:25 to play in the opening frame. From there, Ohio State and Penn State traded the lead until a post-hook from center Felix Okpara and a three-pointer from Sensabaugh lifted the Buckeyes' lead to 33-29 with 4:46 remaining in the half.

A three-pointer from Lundy and five-straight points from guard Camren Wynter pushed the Nittany Lions back into the lead, 37-35, with 2:31 remaining in the frame, but a two-handed dunk off of an alley-oop from Okpara knotted things up at 37. Both offenses went silent from there, going more than two minutes without a bucket while combining to miss their final five shots of the half to take a 37-37 tie into the break.

Thornton and Sensabaugh led the Ohio State offense in the opening frame, scoring 14 and 10 points, respectively, while the Buckeyes shot 51.7 percent and didn't register a turnover. Pickett — who entered the game averaging 18.6 points per game — was held to just three first-half points while

battling foul trouble, but Lundy and Wynter filled his void with 14 and 11 points in the frame.

Similar to the first half, Thornton and Sensabaugh paced Ohio State's offense early in the final frame, scoring seven of the Buckeyes' first nine points, while Penn State took a 48-46 lead into the under-16 timeout. A three-pointer from Lundy and a pair of free throws from Pickett pushed Penn State's advantage to six, 55-49, but the Buckeyes came storming back with an 8-0 run — sparked by a pair of layups from Isaac Likekele — to pull in front 57-55 with 11:28 remaining in regulation.

From there, the lead changed hands seven more times while the Nittany Lions carried a 66-65 lead with 5:49 to play. Pickett found his rhythm in the meantime, embarking on a 9-2 run on his own to push the Penn State lead to 70-65 with 2:58 left. Sensabaugh and Thornton each scored a layup to pull the Buckeyes within one, 70-69, with 1:24 to play, but Pickett finished a three-point play to make it a two-possession game with 59 seconds left.

Pickett finished the game at the free throw line, while the Nittany Lions handed the Buckeyes their 14th loss in their last 15 games. Ohio State and Penn State traded the lead 20 times, but the Nittany Lions held firm at the end of the contest.

Sensabaugh and Thornton carried Ohio State for much of the evening, producing 20 and 19 points. Ohio State assisted on 11 of its 29 makes while shooting 46.0 percent (29 of 63), while only tallying one turnover.

Lundy and Wynter led the Nittany Lions throughout the contest with 19 and 18, respectively, while they both produced four makes from beyond the arc.

Ohio State remains at home to take on Illinois, in the second leg of a three-game homestand, on Sunday with tip-off set for noon on CBS.