

Women's Hockey: Ohio State's Run Comes To An End Against Wisconsin



Without the uniforms and logos, the beginning of Ohio State's Frozen Four matchup against Wisconsin could have easily passed for a replay of Ohio State's first matchup of the postseason on Tuesday against Boston College. Just like in that quarterfinals matchup, the Buckeyes broke out to a tremendously slow start, feeling out the Badgers but struggling with mistakes in the process, including one defensive slip-up that led to an early Badger goal.

In that first game, Ohio State bounced back. It took advantage of Boston College penalties, clawed back in the second period and dominated the final 40 minutes of play after finding its groove. The Buckeyes had a distinct talent advantage and flexed it repeatedly against an overpower Eagles defense, firing nearly 50 shots on net in the final two frames.

In this second game? No such luck. Wisconsin took command of the sixth and final matchup of the season between these two teams, forcing Ohio State into more passes and fewer shots while slicing through the Buckeye defense on the way to a 4-2 victory and a berth against Northeastern in the national title game.

The Badgers followed that early goal with a second to start the second period, this time from Casey O'Brien, before putting the game on ice with just under 12 minutes to play in the second frame on a beautiful breakaway goal, sparked by O'Brien and Makenna Webster and finished with a tap in from Caitlin Schneider.

Is this third line good or what?? ☐

☐: @casey_obrien5 @makweb8 pic.twitter.com/MDL7SldfhE

— Wisconsin Hockey (@BadgerWHockey) March 19, 2021

Ohio State answered quickly with a rebound for Gabby Rosenthal in a four-on-four situation to cut the deficit to two goals with six minutes to play in the second period. It's been a shaky postseason for Rosenthal, who was dinged for a pair of penalties against Boston College, but after serving as a spark

plug all season, she hoped to fill that role again with this goal.

□ BUCKEYES ARE BACK IN IT □ @gabbyrosenthal5 trims the Wisconsin lead to 3-1 on this 4v4 goal. #GoBuckeyes pic.twitter.com/uwOMH0YAs4

— Ohio State Women's Hockey (@OhioStateWHKY) March 19, 2021

Briefly, it looked as though she had. The Buckeyes offense dominated that four-on-four, generating several chances including a near breakaway, that dissolved only after a cross-ice pass attempt slid a few inches behind its intended target and into a Badger stick. The rest of the period belonged to the Buckeyes, which put eight more shots up before the horn, though none found the back of the net, sending Wisconsin into the final frame holding onto that 3-1 lead.

It would not last. With the Buckeyes on the hunt for another goal and essentially selling out to find the front of the net at the risk of allowing a breakaway, they finally found another with 12 minutes to play, with Sara Saekkinen netting a tip-in.

IT'S. A. ONE. GOAL. GAME. @SaraSkkinen scores off assists from @madison_bizal and @LizSchepers □

Badgers 3, #Buckeyes 2 // #GoBuckeyes pic.twitter.com/su62HQ0PWI

— Ohio State Women's Hockey (@OhioStateWHKY) March 19, 2021

Trailing by just one goal, Sophie Jacques nearly knotted the game at 3-3 shortly after with a snipe from the point, but Badger netminder Kennedy Blair came up big once again with a glove save to maintain the lead.

It was Jacques again in the final minute nearly finding the back of the net with an extra attacker on the ice, but her shot clinked off the post and fell harmlessly behind Blair. A last-ditch save from Rosenthal on the ensuing clear attempt prevented an empty net goal, but a Buckeye turnover in the neutral zone seconds later presented a free lane for Wisconsin to shoot on that open net, extend the lead to 4-2 and survive Ohio State's final period onslaught.

The Buckeyes close the season with a 13-7 record, their second Frozen Four berth in four seasons and a runner-up claim in the WCHA. Star forward Emma Maltais is expected to return next season and will look to lead the Buckeyes back to title contention once again.