



After suffering tough losses to Duke and Kansas during non-conference play, the Buckeyes finally opened up league play in Columbus last night.

Ohio State kicked off its campaign for a fourth straight Big Ten title in dominant fashion, defeating the Nebraska Cornhuskers 70-44 in front of a moderate crowd at Value City Arena.

Deshaun Thomas was outstanding, scoring 18 points in the first half on his way to notching a game-high 22 for the Buckeyes. The junior forward added eight rebounds, two assists and a steal to his stat line as he guided Ohio State to the 26-point victory.

“I was really happy with Deshaun because they threw something defensively at him that was a little different,” Ohio State coach Thad Matta said after the game. “He and the other guys handled it really well. We seemed to have more of an understanding of what we needed to do every time we went down the court.”

The Buckeyes moved the ball very well on offense, working their way inside Nebraska’s zone defense with aggressive perimeter passing. Ohio State assisted on 16 of its 29 made baskets, which aided the Buckeyes in shooting 49 percent from the field.

Aaron Craft talked about playing against the zone, “We have experience with it and we can continue to attack it. The biggest thing is to not let them make us play slow on offense.”

Ohio State’s defense was just as good.

The Buckeyes held Nebraska to just 30 percent shooting Wednesday night while forcing 14 turnovers. Ohio State also had a 41-29 rebound advantage and outscored the Cornhuskers 40-16 in the paint. With Nebraska’s awful outside shooting -- the connected on just six of their 21 3-pointers -- they had no chance against the Buckeyes.

Nebraska coach Tim Miles came away impressed, “I thought they did a good job on their interior defense. We were something like 11-for-35 on 2 [pointers] and that’s just ineffective basketball,” Miles said. “I thought they did a nice job. We couldn’t get a tally going inside the paint at all.”

Nebraska earned its first and only advantage of the game very early when Dylan Talley connected on a triple to give the Cornhuskers a 3-2 lead. The Buckeyes, fueled by seven quick points from Thomas, responded with a 9-0 run that set the tone for the rest of the game. Nebraska managed to cut Ohio State’s lead to five at one point, but the Buckeyes closed the half with a 16-2 run that effectively ended the game. When the two teams entered the locker room at halftime, Ohio State held a 36-17 advantage.

Craft, who impacted the game in almost every statistical category outside of scoring with six rebounds, eight assists (against no turnovers), talked about the team’s chemistry, “We’re beginning to understand when we communicate and talk on the floor, we are able to be more effective.”

The Buckeyes will need that chemistry this weekend as they travel to Champaign to take on the No. 11 Illinois Fighting Illini.

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