



Coming into Sunday's game against Michigan State, Ohio State was just 1-7 against top 25 teams this year and in desperate need of a signature win.

The Buckeyes got that win Sunday evening in Columbus, using a 24-5 second-half run to overcome a nine-point deficit in a 68-60 victory over the Spartans.

Aaron Craft was fantastic, scoring a game-high (and career-high) 21 points to go along with six assists for the Buckeyes (20-7, 10-5 Big Ten). He helped Ohio State overcome a rough first half (where they missed 19 of their 29 shots) to shoot a blazing 57 percent from the field in the second half.

Michigan State coach Tom Izzo talked about why Craft was so effective getting to the basket, "He beat us every way you could beat us. It was a joint effort. It wasn't one guy who did not cover those ball screens very well."

The Buckeyes were able to beat the Spartans despite a lackluster outing from Deshaun Thomas. The Big Ten's leading scorer was just four of 16 from the field for 14 points, but because of Craft's aggressiveness, Ohio State found offense outside of Thomas.

"I'm excited for Aaron [Craft]. I have faith in his offense and I believe in him. It's good for him to score and attack their guards," Thomas said after the game. "It will help our team. In my eyes, everyone can score on this team. It was big for Aaron to come in and help us to win the game."

Ohio State's defense also tightened up in the second half, limiting Michigan State to just 40 percent shooting after connecting on half of its shots from the field in the first. The Buckeyes also forced 14 turnovers, which they turned into 19 points on the other end.

The Buckeyes played very tough in the first half.

After scoring the game's first four points, Michigan State answered with a 10-2 run that could have knocked the Buckeyes into one of their early-game funks. Ohio State didn't go away, though, and had a response for every Spartans run in the first half.

The Buckeyes didn't get much from Thomas as the Big Ten's leading scorer missed seven of his first eight shots in the first half. Ohio State also missed 10 of its 11 3-pointers through 20 minutes, and reserve center Evan Ravenel led the Buckeyes with seven points off the bench.

If not for the 11 first half bench points, Ohio State would have been in trouble. Michigan State dominated in the inside, scoring 24 of its first 31 points in the paint while out-rebounding the Buckeyes 21-13. The Spartans also shot 50 percent from the field while Ohio State struggled, shooting 35 percent.

Despite the Buckeyes' scrappy play, Michigan State was able to end the half with six unanswered points to take a 31-25 lead into the locker room at halftime.

When second-half play kicked off, a Gary Harris 3-pointer pushed Michigan State's lead to nine and it again looked like the Buckeyes could be in trouble. After a couple of lackadaisical defensive possessions, Ohio State coach Thad Matta called a timeout and ripped into his team.

It was a momentum-changing moment.

The Buckeyes scored on eight of their next 10 possessions, triggering a 24-5 run that the Spartans never recovered from. Michigan State got the game with three points down the stretch, but outstanding defense by Ravenel and even better free-throw shooting from Ohio State helped the Buckeyes hold off for the win.

"This time of the year, we need to find something rolling. We found ourselves in a similar situation last year," Craft said after the game. "Hopefully, we can continue this going forward."

Who's Next?

The Buckeyes travel to Evanston Thursday night to take on the Northwestern Wildcats. The game will tip off at 7:00 p.m EST and will be televised by ESPN2.