



The Ohio State Buckeyes (13-0) closed out their non-conference schedule with a bang last night as they blasted the Tennessee-Martin Skyhawks 100-40.

Tennessee-Martin might be the worst team on Ohio State's schedule, but the 60 point margin of victory was an impressive achievement for a Buckeye team that seems to be hitting its stride as they enter Big Ten play. The balance on Ohio State's offense makes this team one of the most dangerous in the country as the Buckeyes had five players score double-digit point totals against the Skyhawks. This comes just four days after six different Buckeyes reached double-digits in their win over Oakland last Thursday.

Buford highlighted a handful of dazzling performances put on by the Buckeyes as he scored 23 points on 9-11 shooting while adding five rebounds and four assists. The majority of his damage was done early as he scored 16 points, four rebounds and three assists by halftime. If he hadn't been benched midway through the second half (as a result of the blowout), he may have put up 30. Buckeyes head coach Thad Matta came away pleased with Buford's play, "Will gets stronger as the season goes on. As a coach, you always like to see guys who put in that kind of work have a good outcome."

To round it off, Sullinger had 18 points and 11 rebounds (his sixth double-double of the season), Deshaun Thomas had 20 points and 9 rebounds off the bench and both Lighty and Lauderdale

added 10. The Buckeyes combined to shoot 58% from the field (41-70) and assisted on 26 of their 41 made baskets. The scoring output gave Ohio State just their second 100 point game of the season. The first came in the season opener against North Carolina A&T, when they scored a season high 102.

As the score may indicate, Ohio State started this game hot and raced out to a big lead. Not even three minutes into the game, the Buckeyes had built a double digit lead (12-0), and it was never close from that point on. After 10 minutes of play, Ohio State was out in front by 26. The Buckeyes went on scoring runs of 12-0, 13-0 and 10-0, all within the first 20 minutes of the game as the lead swelled to 32 by halftime.

The second half was a near carbon copy of the first. Even the first few plays seemed eerily similar as Buford hit his first field goal attempt, then stole an errant pass on the next possession which led to another Ohio State basket. The Buckeyes outscored Tennessee-Martin 49-17 in the first and 51-23 in the second. The only difference may have come in Ohio State's personnel rotation. A lot of regular bench players notched quality minutes in the second half, and it was an encouraging sign for Thad Matta as his team builds momentum, "I think these guys have continued to get better."

When the offense is clicking as well as it is, it's easy to overlook the defense. Ohio State absolutely suffocated Tennessee-Martin's offense last night. The Skyhawks only managed 40 points, a season low for them through 13 games. They combined to shoot a miserable 27% from the field on 17-63 shooting while giving up 19 turnovers (13 of which were Ohio State steals). Think about this -- the Buckeyes had nine more assists (26) than the Skyhawks had field goals (17).

The Buckeyes now enter Big Ten play as the only unbeaten team in the conference. The players and the coaches know that league play is a different animal, and players like William Buford know what it takes, "When you get to the Big Ten conference, your record starts 0-0 again so you have to be focused and ready." When asked about the team's direction, Buford added, "Our confidence is pretty high. When you're No. 2 in the country and 13-0 you have to have a bit of confidence in you."

Who's Next?

Ohio State will travel to Bloomington to take on the Indiana Hoosiers this Friday, December 31. The game will tip-off at 6:00 PM EST and will be carried by ESPN2.