



Jared Sullinger missed a second consecutive game with back spasms, and without him, the Ohio State Buckeyes suffered their first loss of the season -- falling 78-67 to the Kansas Jayhawks on Saturday afternoon.

The Buckeyes were able to hang around throughout the game, consistently staying within striking distance of No. 13 Kansas, but Jayhawks' Thomas Robinson and Elijah Johnson were able to keep the Buckeyes at bay with strong performances. Robinson scored 21 points and grabbed seven rebounds without having to deal with Sullinger inside and Johnson scored 15 points off five 3-pointers for Kansas.

On the other end, the Buckeyes clearly missed Sullinger's presence, especially in the first half. Deshaun Thomas had a fantastic start to the game, scoring 15 first half points before cooling off and finishing the contest with 19. It took more than half the game for Buford to find his groove as he missed seven of his first eight shots before finishing with a team high 21 points. The Buckeyes shot just 38% from the floor without Sullinger, but Kansas coach Bill Self doesn't think that should take anything away from Kansas' victory.

"I don't think you put an asterisk with the win," Self said. "Ohio State can certainly say, and rightfully so, 'Jared didn't play.' And we know he didn't play, and they're a much better team with him. We wanted him to play. But just because he plays doesn't guarantee anything."

Ohio State coach Thad Matta didn't make any excuses either, especially when his team had a chance to win without their preseason All-American in the lineup, "When you make mistakes, Kansas is so good, they're going to make you pay, and we made some key mistakes," Matta

said. "Our guys competed -- just made mistakes down the stretch."

The game could not have started worse for the Buckeyes. Ohio state looked absolutely lost offensively from the start and missed their first six shots from the field. Kansas on the other hand came out hot, connecting on four of their first five to build a 9-2 lead. When it looked and felt like Ohio State would be routed, Deshaun Thomas caught fire. After missing his first two shots, the talented sophomore from Indiana provided the only offensive consistency for the team. Thomas hit three 3-pointers and two other baskets down low before finishing the half with 15 points. Without him, the Buckeyes wouldn't have been able to stay in the game as the rest of the team combined to shoot just 18% from the field in the first half. On the other side, Kansas seemingly couldn't miss as they shot 65% from the field while hitting four of their eight 3-point attempts. But with 12 first half turnovers from Kansas and a 9-1 point differential from the free throw line, the Buckeyes were only down 35-29 at half time.

"We competed," Thomas said after the game. "We're a competitive team and that's a positive. Without Jared, we came out and competed without him."

The second half was a reflection of Thomas' postgame comment. Time after time Kansas was able to build a 10 point lead, just a few buckets away from blowing the game wide open. And time after time, Ohio State somehow found a way to answer. After an abysmal first half that had to feel like a replay of the Kentucky game for Buford, the only senior on the team did everything he could to bring the Buckeyes back. Buford scored 19 points for Ohio State in the final 20 minutes and at one point, he had scored 14 of 17 points for the Buckeyes. That was during a pivotal stretch in the game where Ohio State cut a double digit deficit to four points.

But just like Kansas never taking the game over, Ohio State couldn't get over the hump. Every time the Buckeyes got close, Thomas Robinson would make a play down low. The Buckeyes perimeter defense was surprisingly porous and Tyshawn Taylor racked up 13 assists, many of them coming from a wide open Elijah Johnson behind the arch. Without Sullinger down low, Lenzelle Smith, Jr. was trying to help off his man (Johnson) and the Buckeyes paid for it behind the arch as Kansas buried nine 3-pointers in the game.

The Buckeyes were fortunate enough to take something away from their loss to Kansas though, "We're a great team with [Sullinger], don't get me wrong," Thomas said. "But we came out and competed and that's one thing that coach noticed."

Who's Next?

The Buckeyes come home to play the USC Upstate Spartans on Wednesday, December, 14. The game will tip-off at 7:30 PM EST and will be televised by the Big Ten Network.

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