



The No. 2 Ohio State Buckeyes (12-1) wrapped up their non-conference schedule by beating the Miami RedHawks 69-40 in Columbus Thursday night.

William Buford led the Buckeyes with 18 points, four rebounds and three assists. With his performance, Buford became just the fourth Buckeye basketball player to exceed 1,000 points, 500 rebounds and 300 assists. His 18 points also moved him up the Ohio State record books as the seventh highest scorer in school history, surpassing Perry Carter with 1,629 career points.

“It feels great to be even in the category with those people,” Buford said. He later added, “I don’t care about scoring and statistics as long as we win.”

Deshaun Thomas scored 15 points -- his 12th consecutive game scoring in double figures. After looking limited against Lamar coming off a foot injury, Jared Sullinger seemed more like his old self and added 11 points in six rebounds.

It looked like Ohio State was going to buck their recent trend of slow starts when they came out and made five of their first six shots against Miami. It took the Buckeyes less than four minutes to build an 11-0 lead as they stifled Miami’s already inept offense. But just like many of Ohio State’s December games, the shots started clanking off the rim. The team went on to miss 16 of their final 21 shot attempts in the half, and aside from Buford (who connected on 5-10 for 11 points), no one was able to find a rhythm on offense. The Buckeyes finished the half shooting just 11-28 from the field (39%) and 1-8 from 3-point land.

Ohio State did bring their A-game on defense though. As bad as they were on offense, they were equally good with their defensive pressure -- creating 12 Miami turnovers that turned into 11 Buckeyes points. Ohio State held the RedHawks to just six field goals in the first half (0-7 from behind the arch), limiting Miami to just 17 points through 20 minutes. But with their poor effort on offense, the Buckeyes only took a nine point lead into the locker room at halftime.

Ohio State coach Thad Matta was looking to establish more of a flow on offense going into the second half, "What I told the guys at halftime, them [Miami] holding the ball got us a little into the standpoint of 'I'll just take any shot.' In the first half, however, we got what appeared to be open shots but they weren't what we wanted."

The second half was a complete turn-around for Ohio State. After Deshaun Thomas missed the first shot from the field, the Buckeyes caught fire. Miami scored on a backdoor cut their first possession, but it was all Ohio State from that point on. The Buckeyes scored as many points in six minutes (16) as they did in the final 15 minutes of the first half. Every Buckeye starter scored in a 17-4 run that put Ohio State up by 20 points. It was a barrage that didn't slow down until midway through the second half when Matta decided to pull most of his starters. By that point the Buckeyes were up by 27 with no chance of losing.

The final 10 minutes of the game provided a great opportunity for Ohio State's bench -- namely for a player that has never seen the court in a Buckeyes uniform. That was until just under the four minute mark when LaQuinton Ross -- a prized member of last year's recruiting class -- made his Ohio State debut. Due to a conflict with a couple high school grades, Ross was declared ineligible for the fall quarter. After getting his grades squared away, he rejoined the team last week but didn't play in the three games he was eligible for. It was only a matter of time before Ross, the guy who looked like the best frosh on the team this past summer, found the court. The heralded freshman sent the crowd into a frenzy when he drained a transition 3-pointer on his first possession (and first shot) as a Buckeye.

Matta was looking to tame expectations after the game though, "Q (Ross) is not ready at that level yet. Yesterday at practice I told him you can shoot the basketball, you just have to get your feet set, so it was probably a relief for him to knock that first one down. We just have to continue to bring him along."

As the Buckeyes prepare for conference play, which starts next Wednesday at home against Northwestern, Buford thinks his team has room to improve, "We've got to get a lot better than where we are today. We're not putting too many points on the board, but if we keep playing hard on defense and follow the coaches plans, I think we'll be fine."

(Photo credit - Dan Harker - TheOzone.net)

[Follow @davidreg412](https://twitter.com/davidreg412)