The No. 4 Ohio State Buckeyes defeated the Northern Kentucky Norse 70-43 Saturday night, improving to 5-1 on the year after their close loss to Duke last Wednesday.

The 27-point victory seemed to be just what the doctor ordered, but Thad Matta was singing a different tune after the game.

"The number one thing I wanted to see is if we would get up off the mat and have a little fight to us," Matta said. "I don't think we were as effective that way as I wanted to be."

A number of issues came up in Ohio State's loss to Duke, including some poor shooting from the team and a lack of trust in the bench from the coaching staff.

The Buckeyes' shooting woes continued. After hitting on just 34 percent of its shots in Cameron Indoor Stadium, Ohio State only shot 38 percent from the field against Northern Kentucky. Sam Thompson was the only starter to shot over 50 percent (three of five from the field for 10 points) against the Norse. None of the other four starters shot over 33 percent from the field.

Ohio State's leading scorer, Deshaun Thomas, only scored 14 points despite taking 14 shots. He talked about the Buckeyes' shooting struggles, "We didn't come out putting it in the hole. But, you know, it's us staying together and preparing in practice and shooting the ball well."

The team did get a lift from the bench, though, as LaQuinton Ross scored a game-high 22 points on eight of 12 shooting. The sophomore came out hot, scoring 13 points in the first half before finishing the game setting a career-high in points and rebounds (eight).

"My coaches really pushed me in practice and told me to shoot the ball, to have my feet ready," Ross said. "I just got the opportunity and I had to take advantage of it."

Ross showed flashes in the first half against Duke, but the staff stuck mainly with the starters in the second half to try and limit the Blue Devils' explosive offense. Matta admitted that not involving the bench more was a mistake after the Duke loss, which is something he planned on doing more this year.

"Coach Matta told us from the beginning of the year, he's not going to do like he did in the past. Everybody knows that he would get that group of guys that he trusts, like six or eight guys, and those are the guys he played," Ross said after the game. "But this year he told us there was going to be a lot of in and out, like he was going to be switching in guys and putting them in different positions to see what they can do."

Matta has to like what he has seen from Ross so far this year. On a team with limited options on offense, Ross is someone they desperately need to step up. Saturday's performance only reaffirms that notion.

There weren't many issues with Ohio State's defense, though. The Buckeyes stifled Northern Kentucky all game long. The Norse shot just 27 percent from the field against Ohio State and missed 22 of their 29 3-point attempts. The Buckeyes forced 20 turnovers, which they turned into 22 points on the other end.

After going without a single steal against Duke Wednesday night, point guard Aaron Craft snagged four against Northern Kentucky.

Thompson talked about Ohio State's defensive performance, "When all five of us are playing together we are a tough team to score on. They finished with 43 points and that's something we have to be proud of."

Who's Next?

The Buckeyes won't play again until they host the Long Beach State 49ers on Saturday. The game tips off at 12:00 p.m. EST and will be televised by the Big Ten Network.

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