Ohio State's game against Winthrop Tuesday night was supposed to be a final tuneup before the Buckeyes host the No. 9 Kansas Jayhawks on Saturday.

The Eagles (4-5) gave the Buckeyes (9-1) a much bigger fight than expected, battling for all 40 minutes in a 65-55 Ohio State victory.

"You have to give Winthrop a ton of credit," Ohio State coach Thad Matta said. "They played to win tonight."

Deshaun Thomas was erratic, shooting just seven of 21 from the field, but that didn't stop Ohio State's leading scorer from posting a game-high 21 points.

The Buckeyes' offensive performance as a whole reflected Thomas' as the team shot just 39 percent from the field on their way to scoring a season-low 65 points.

"I wasn't ready mentally and I knew my shots were not going in," Thomas said after the game.

Lenzelle Smith, Jr. was the only other Buckeyes player to reach double digits, scoring an efficient 14 points on five of 11 shooting. Aaron Craft chipped in eight while Evan Ravenel and Amir Williams both scored seven.

Thomas admitted that the Buckeyes were looking ahead to Kansas, "Everyone's mind was not right starting this game tonight. During practice we had a scrimmage and our problems during the scrimmage spilled over to our game."

Early in the first half, it looked like it was going to be another Ohio State blowout.

The Buckeyes raced out and hit their first four shots from the field to build a 9-2 lead. Thomas hit two straight jumpers to start the game and Smith, Jr. was shooting well early.

That's when the Buckeyes went cold, and Winthrop answered in a big way. After Ohio State built their seven-point lead, the Eagles responded with a 17-5 run of their own while building a 19-14 advantage midway through the first.

The Buckeyes clawed their way back despite seven straight missed shots from Thomas, and even built a six-point lead before Winthrop closed the half with five unanswered points.

After 20 minutes of play, the Buckeyes shot 36 percent from the field (and just 33 percent from behind the arch) while being outrebounded 22-18. Ohio State led 31-30 at the break.

The second half played out much like the first.

Winthrop wouldn't go away as the Eagles and the Buckeyes traded baskets through the first five minutes of the second half. After missing his ninth consecutive shot, though, Deshaun Thomas took over -- connecting on a layup and four straight jumpers for a 12-point barrage in a five minutes span

The Eagles just wouldn't give up. The Buckeyes managed to build a 15-point lead with just under four minutes to play, but Winthrop was able to close the gap to eight in the final minutes. Ohio State converted at the free throw line, though, sealing their ninth win of the season.

After a long stretch of mediocre opponents, the Buckeyes can finally focus on Kansas, "We are looking forward to the game," Thomas said. "It will be a big game for us, but we can't have the start we had for this game. We have to prepare over the next few days."

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