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After scoring a season-low 48 points in an embarrassing and rare home loss to Michigan State three days ago, the No. 6 Ohio State Buckeyes wanted to refocus and right the ship as they close in on the end of the regular season. The opportunity to do so came in the form of the Minnesota Golden Gophers Tuesday night and the Buckeyes were very ungracious guests. Powered by William Buford and Jared Sullinger, Ohio State bullied their way to a 78-68 road victory and a much-needed palate cleansing.

Buford led all scorers with 24 points (shooting 10-17 from the field) while adding eight rebounds and five assists. Sullinger connected on six of 11 shots on his way to 23 points while snagging eight rebounds. This -- just days after combining to shoot 7-27 against Michigan State -- was exactly what Ohio State needed to put the loss behind them.

Ohio State coach Thad Matta talked about Buford and Sullinger after the game, “I thought Jared played a very heady game. They tried to mix it up on him and to his credit he showed great patience and strength and made some big plays down there.” He later added, “It was good to see Will get back on track.”

Although Buford and Sullinger carried the load, the entire team played “within the system” and avoided the one-on-one situations that doomed them against the Spartans. Ohio State seemed focused from the beginning and played with an efficiency that translated well on the stat sheet. The Buckeyes shot 45% from the field and assisted on 15 of their 25 made field goals. The flow of the game allowed Matta to get his bench involved as 10 players saw action against the Gophers.
Aaron Craft -- who had six points, five assists and six steals -- talked about coming back after a loss, “Any time you lose a game like we did Saturday, you have to refocus. We knew we had to get better, and we couldn’t just wave off the loss and act like it didn’t happen. It was something we had to accept and move on from. It was good to see our basketball team grow.”

The pivotal stretch in the game came surprisingly early. Buford started hot, connecting on his first three shots as both teams started 5-6 from the field. A little over five minutes had ticked off the clock when an Andre Hollins 3-pointer tied the game at 12.

That's when Ohio State took over.

In a stretch that lasted just over seven minutes, the Buckeyes blasted Minnesota with a 20-0 run. Ohio State overwhelmed the Gophers on offense, getting buckets from six different players during the seven-minute onslaught. Minnesota could do nothing to stop it as they went 12 straight possessions with six missed shots and six turnovers. A Rodney Williams layup mercifully ended the Gophers' scoring drought, but by then the Buckeyes had a commanding 32-14 lead.

Minnesota Coach Tubby Smith watched as his team crumbled under the pressure, "I was really disappointed, that was disturbing. We had guys that felt the pressure and tried to score... We needed better defense, we needed to rebound and get some stops."

On the other side, Matta was pleased with his teams intensity, "We showed some tenacity to come out here and get out to a great start."

Ohio State's dominance ended abruptly. After starting the game making nine of their first 11 shots, Minnesota's defense tightened and the Buckeyes missed 12 of their next 15. That helped the Gophers build a 16-6 run of their own, cutting Ohio State's lead to 10 in the final minute of the half. Desperately needing a bucket, the Buckeyes went to the hot hand and found Buford on the wing. He drove toward the baseline and pulled up over two defenders, drilling a high-arching, fifteen foot jumper that gave the Buckeyes a 40-28 lead going into halftime.

"We let our guard down and you knew that Minnesota was going to make a run," Matta said. "We knew they would come back."

The Buckeyes came out in the second half and tried to put the game away -- scoring the first five points and building a 17 point lead. To Minnesota's credit, the Gophers just wouldn't go away as they fought back and cut Ohio State's lead to nine with just over 10 minutes to play.

That's about as close as they would get though as every Gopher run was answered by either Buford or Sullinger. The second half featured a 14 minute stretch where the only two Buckeyes to score were Buford and Sullinger, and combined with solid free-throw shooting down the stretch, it was enough for Ohio State to close out with a 10 point victory.

Buford wanted to prove a point that Saturday's game against Michigan State was an anomaly, "Coming off a loss, you have to prove to the world that we're not going to take losses," Buford said. "We just wanted to come out and play aggressive and play with a mindset that we wanted to win this game and prove a point."

Who's Next:

The Buckeyes will travel to Ann Arbor to play the No. 19 Michigan Wolverines on Saturday, February 18. The game will be televised by ESPN and tip-off at 9:00 pm EST.

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