Illinois came to Columbus on a bad night.

The Ohio State Buckeyes were coming off their fifth loss of the season, a 56-51 defeat to arch-rival Michigan on Saturday night. After being buried under 48 hours of relentless doubt and negativity, the Buckeyes took out all their frustrations in an 83-67 beat down of the Fighting Illini.

Deshaun Thomas scored 19 points, William Buford scored 17 and Aaron Craft added 11 as Ohio State bucked their recent shooting slump to shoot 65% against Illinois. The Buckeyes also made seven of their 13 3-pointers, and that efficiency on the perimeter allowed Ohio State to lead the game for all 40 minutes.

Ohio State coach Thad Matta talked about the Buckeyes' hot shooting, "It was obviously good to see the ball go in early. I thought we got out and got some good shots and got the ball moving," Matta said. "We were able to get some good shots off of our defense. It was delightful to see, trust me... We didn't do anything magical; they just went down for us tonight."

After struggling on offense in losses to Michigan and Michigan State, Matta wanted the Buckeyes to push the ball and look for easier buckets. In practices leading up to the Illinois game, Matta had his Buckeyes work on getting out in transition and it showed against the Illini. The Buckeyes tried out a new rotation that put speedy point guard Shannon Scott on the court with Aaron Craft at the same time. Although Scott turned the ball over a few times, his presence on the court seemed to give Ohio State a sense of urgency.

“I was very pleased with what we did,” Matta said when talking about Craft and Scott on the floor together. “It just gave us another attacker to make plays.”

And to his credit, Scott made some good adjustments playing alongside Craft, “I felt like it was a lot easier playing with Aaron. I could get off the ball and give it to him, and go down the court and make plays like that.”

The Buckeyes were just as good on defense. Ohio State held Illinois to under 40% shooting for the game and limited the Illini to just 3-18 on 3-pointers. Brandon Paul -- who torched the Buckeyes for 43 points the last time these two teams played -- struggled all night with Craft guarding him as he went just 2-9 from the field for nine points.

Ohio State’s offense operated as smoothly as it has all season in the first half. Lenzelle Smith Jr. started the game off with a nice drive and reverse layup, then the Buckeyes got buckets from Sullinger, Craft and Thomas on consecutive possessions to open up a 9-2 lead. The Buckeyes connected on 11 of their first 12 shots from the field and scored more points in the first 10 minutes of the game against Illinois (32) then they did in any half against Michigan or Michigan State last week. It was a stretch that gave the Buckeyes a commanding 28-8 lead over Illinois.

Deshaun Thomas talked about Ohio State’s quick start. “It felt great. We just listened to Coach Matta. They prepared us coming in for the game, but it was up to us to come out there and show up and that’s what we did,” Thomas said. “It started on defense. We got some great transitions and collections. It felt great to be scoring.”

The Illini didn’t quit and responded with a 10-4 run that cut Ohio State’s lead to 14, but Buford answered back with a drive and scoop followed by consecutive 3-pointers from Smith Jr. and Thomas. Ohio State’s quick run made it 40-18 and as the first half closed, Illinois made a push to make it 42-26 going into halftime.

Seven different Buckeyes scored in the first half as Ohio State connected on 17 of their 24 shots (71%). Maybe the most surprising thing about the first half was Ohio State’s ability to build the lead without contributions from Sullinger, who scored just three points through 20 minutes. On the other end, Illinois had only made eight field goals off of 29% shooting, but they received a bump at the free throw line by making nine of 10 freebies.

The second half wasn’t much different than the first. Both teams went back and forth with a couple turnovers, but Buford got hot and scored five quick points to put Ohio State up by 17. Soon after, the Buckeyes pushed the lead to 20 points, and Illinois didn’t cut the deficit to the teens until the closing minutes of the game.

The Buckeyes will get four days off before their last home game of the season -- a matchup with the No. 16 Wisconsin Badgers.

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