Ohio State was in a close battle with Michigan in the conference semifinals, leading the Wolverines 47-45 with just under 10 minutes to play. After 30 minutes of competitive basketball, the Buckeyes took over the game with an 18-3 run, eventually beating Michigan 68-61.

William Buford was a huge reason for Ohio State's run late in the game. After a timeout was called, Buford was pushed and got in a scuffle with Michigan's Jordan Morgan. With Ohio State already pulling away from the Wolverines, Buford assisted on Ohio State's next basket and then scored six straight points to blow the game wide open.

"That kind of ticked me off," Buford said after the game. "I'm not gonna lie, it made me more aggressive."

The Buckeyes looked to be in complete control with a 17 point lead and just under two minutes to play, but Michigan was able to make things interesting down the stretch. The Wolverines scored an incredible 13 unanswered points in 80 seconds, cutting Ohio State's lead to four before the Buckeyes put the game away at the free throw line.

After ending the regular season with four blowouts, Ohio State coach Thad Matta was asked

about the impact two close tournament games could have on his team, “We've been in a lot of tight basketball games throughout the course of the season, and I think our guys have a pretty good understanding, appreciation of what it takes to play through those.” He later added, “I think our guys for the most part have done a very good job of handling the situation that has been thrown at them.”

Ohio State used balance on offense to overwhelm the Wolverines as both Diebler and Buford scored 16, Jared Sullinger chipped in 14 points and 13 rebounds while Thomas provided a boost with nine points off the bench.

The first half was played in a four point bubble as neither team took control. The Buckeyes fell victim to foul trouble as Aaron Craft collected two fouls in three minutes of playing time and Lighty got his second whistle with 10 minutes left in the half. That forced freshman reserves Deshaun Thomas and Jordan Sibert into the game to play some important minutes for the Buckeyes. Ohio State was able to outscore the Wolverines by six while Craft and Lighty were on the bench, and Matta talked about the hustle and impressive play from Thomas and Sibert.

“I thought our guys, we battled through foul trouble there in the first half. Jordan [Sibert] and Deshaun [Thomas] came in and really did a good job.”

And with media noting concerns about Ohio State’s shallow bench, Matta said, “I think from the standpoint of you're constantly trying to build your bench, we are on March 12th. Those guys [Thomas and Sibert] practice extremely hard every day, and it's funny, I always tell guys, you're getting better and you don't even know it, and that was probably a prime example today...”

With their third victory over the Wolverines this season, the Buckeyes advance to the conference championship game for the third consecutive year.

Who’s Next?

The Buckeyes will battle the Penn State Nittany Lions for the conference championship on Sunday, March 13. The game will be televised by CBS and will tip-off at 3:30 PM EST.