It was supposed to be the marquee game of the season for Ohio State -- a stiff test for the second ranked Buckeyes when they faced the No. 3 Duke Blue Devils in Columbus on Tuesday night. What unfolded was just another rout for Ohio State as the Blue Devils folded in an 85-63 blowout.

“Sometimes you just get your butt kicked,” Duke coach Mike Krzyzewski said after the game. “My butt is sore... I was focused on trying not to lose by 30.”

The Buckeyes were able to dominate Duke in their Big Ten/ACC challenge matchup with a balanced attack offensively. Jared Sullinger led the Buckeyes with 21 points while William Buford added 20, Deshaun Thomas scored 18 and Aaron Craft had 17. While seemingly every Buckeye player that hit the court performed well, Deshaun Thomas was the star. Thomas went on a streak where he hit eight straight shots, almost single-handedly taking over the game during the brief time frame where the contest was competitive.

“I wanted to have a big game for my teammates,” Thomas said. “I was kind of the x-factor today. It was fun.”

The Buckeyes got out to a fast start in the first half. After both teams missed their first three shots, Aaron Craft kicked off the scoring by connecting on a 3-pointer. That sparked an 11-0 run for the Buckeyes that ignited a packed Value City Arena.

Duke stormed right back with a 12-2 run of their own, fueled by the strong play of freshman Austin Rivers. It seemed as though the Blue Devils had completely stolen the momentum before

Ohio State flexed its muscle. After missing his first two shots (badly), Deshaun Thomas caught fire. The sophomore forward used an array of inside moves and outside shooting to score 13 points in the first half. Buford was lethal too, scoring 13 points of his own in addition to Sullinger, who had 12 points and five rebounds through 20 minutes.

“We couldn’t hit a shot. Their defense was outstanding and then they got hot,” coach Krzyzewski said. “They can score from a number of different positions.”

The Buckeyes switched up their attack at the beginning of the second half. While starting the game trying to pound the ball inside to Sullinger, Ohio State kicked off the second half with consecutive 3-pointers. The Buckeyes pushed the lead to 24 points with 15 minutes remaining in the game, and Coach K and the Blue Devils were never able to pull within 15 points of the Buckeyes at any point after halftime.

Jared Sullinger was feeling good about his team after the game, “What can I say, this basketball team is something special. We really took [Duke] out of their sets, pressed the ball and got easy shots. We played a great game.”

The Buckeyes finished the game shooting an incredible 59% from the field against Duke (35-59) while also out-rebounding the Blue Devils 33-27. The Buckeyes did a good job limiting Duke’s potent offense, which came into the game averaging over 79 points per game on the season. Against the Buckeyes, the Blue Devils could only manage 63 points (a season low) on 26-55 shooting. A key for Ohio State’s defense was limiting Duke’s outside shooting, which they did effectively as the Blue Devils only hit three of their 15 attempts from behind the arch.

Thad Matta talked about Ohio State’s defense on the peremiter, “That was a huge difference in the game. To their credit, they still managed to mix it up on the perimeter... I told our team that they would make some threes, but you can’t give up and have to keep going at them. To our guys’ credit, they did.”

With the victory, Ohio State improves to 7-0 on the season while simultaneously pushing the countries fourth longest home winning streak to 29. The Buckeyes will try to reach 30 this Saturday at noon against Texas Pan-American.

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