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# Jordan Murphy has career night in Gophers double-OT victory



By [Heather Rule](https://web.archive.org/web/20170701143754/http://www.1500espn.com/author/heather-rule/) | [@hlrule](https://twitter.com/hlrule)

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Jordan Murphy got a pass along the baseline and put up a shot as time expired in the first half to give the Gophers a 40-29 halftime lead over Iowa on Wednesday night at Williams Arena. The shot was good at the buzzer.

It was just that kind of night for the sophomore.

He capped off his outstanding game with a two-handed slam dunk in the second overtime to put the Gophers up by five. It came on the heels of an Amir Coffey steal-and-dunk combo. That was all the Gophers needed to go on to a 101-89 double-overtime victory.

"It was definitely a big momentum swing when we got the back-to-back dunks," Murphy said. "It really helped. It really gets the crowd involved."

To be sure, the Barn was rocking with 11,481 fans who rose to their feet multiple times during the game, sometimes with head coach Richard Pitino waving his arms as encouragement.

Murphy put up a career-high 25 points, 19 rebounds, four blocks and a steal in the victory. It was his 15th career double-double. The 61 percent free-throw shooter also went 5-for-7 from the line and only missed three field goals. Pitino called his performance "phenomenal."

"Jordan did that just by sheer will," Pitino said. "So when he does that, we're pretty difficult."

He fouled out with 1:34 left in the game, though many would argue he got all ball on a block attempt that was whistled for his fifth.

Pitino said he didn't run a play for Murphy, adding that he's said he isn't a great scorer, though that isn't a knock on him.

"But he just found it tonight," Pitino said. "He was getting offensive rebounds. He was hiding behind the defense, guys were finding him, so that's what he needs to do."

Overall, it was a solid win for the Gophers. Like Pitino said after the game: These home games are like gold.

The Gophers outscored Iowa 17-5 in the final five minutes of overtime, an impressive run considering they blew leads in regulation and the first overtime. Not to mention the Gophers weren't new to this position of being in a tight game at the end; they're now 2-2 in overtime games. It was their fourth conference game that needed extra time to determine a winner, and the Gophers haven't exactly put opponents away.

Again versus Iowa, the Gophers had trouble pulling away. A fast start was erased by a 7-0 Iowa run to make it 11-11. Then later the Gophers used an 11-0 run to grab the momentum back. The halftime lead evaporated midway through the second half with a 14-0 Iowa run that pretty much kept the game close the rest of the way. Iowa's Peter Jok – leading scorer in the Big Ten – put up 26 of his 28 points in the second half and beyond.

Nate Mason made a layup with 8.4 seconds left in regulation that got the game to overtime tied 77-77.

The Gophers also had a five-point lead in the first overtime that they let slip away.

"They squandered a lead, and they fought through it," Pitino said.

Murphy and Mason – who had 25 points, seven assists and five rebounds – rose to the occasion throughout the game to get that all-important Big Ten victory on the home court. They made winning plays at the end, Pitino said.

The game was no doubt a welcome improvement for Murphy, who hasn't exactly lit up the scoreboard lately. He leads the team with six double-doubles this season, but he failed to hit double-digit points in seven out of the past nine games. Wednesday was his most productive night offensively since he scored 16 points in the road win over Purdue back on New Year's Day.

Wednesday was also only the third time in conference play he reached double digits in rebounds. That goes hand-in-hand with his scoring.

"It definitely started with my rebounding," Murphy said. "I think that just getting it going on the rebounding end, that would really just let everything get going like that.

"I was just really confident down the stretch."

That confident side of Murphy isn't something that we've seen a whole lot of lately. Gophers fans should hope it continues. They'll need him down the stretch as they try to keep their NCAA Tournament hopes alive.

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