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# Carr, Gophers Keep Rolling at Home in Win over Penn State



Photo Credit: Brian Curski Photography



By [Heather Rule](#) - January 16, 2020

The game was pretty well within reach for the Minnesota Golden Gophers men's basketball team against the Penn State Nittany late Wednesday evening. Just in case there was any doubt, Marcus Carr added the exclamation point.

The redshirt sophomore guard grabbed a defensive rebound then went coast-to-coast for a fast-break bucket with exactly one minute left in the game. Oh, and he drew the foul to complete the three-point play for a 10-point Gophers lead on their way to a 75-69 victory over Penn State at Williams Arena.

"That was a huge play," said Gophers head coach Richard Pitino. "Again, he's only a sophomore, and he doesn't look like a sophomore out there. I'm excited about the future for him. He's going to keep getting better and better."

Besides Big Ten Player of the Week Daniel Oturu being a game-changer for the Gophers, Carr is the second part of the 1-2 punch for the squad. And he was hot right from the get-go, popping a 3-pointer for the first Gophers' bucket of the game.

Carr led all scorers with 27 points and just missed a double-double with six rebounds, nine assists. He also only turned the ball over twice. He played 40 minutes for the sixth time this season, too. It was his third 20-plus-point game in his past five, a mark he's hit five times this season. He was also clutch at the free-throw line on Wednesday, making 10-of-11 shots.

After the Gophers tied the game and took their first lead at 19-16 on a 3-pointer from Payton Willis, Carr connected for back-to-back treys to extend the lead to 25-21; he ended the first half going 3-for-4 from long range.

It marked another Big Ten victory for the Gophers, while handing a reeling Penn State (12-5, 2-4) its third consecutive loss. Overall, Minnesota's winning streak against Penn State reached five games and a 15-3 Gophers record in the head-to-head series.

Another solid game for Minnesota (10-7, 4-3), on the heels of beating a ranked opponent in the defeat of No. 19 Michigan on Sunday afternoon, means its won six of eight games. The losses in that stretch came in double overtime at Purdue and at No. 8 Michigan State. They're also taking care of business on their home court, only losing a nonconference game to DePaul, 73-68, on Nov. 29.

"We've been in a number of close games, especially in the non-conference and even in-conference," Carr said. "So just learning from our mistakes earlier and how we didn't finish and trying to apply those to now, it's definitely a huge thing."

One of the narratives this season for the Gophers has been their strength of schedule being one of the toughest in the country among conference and nonconference play. As of Jan. 13, Minnesota's

schedule ranked the 13th-toughest in NCAA Division I basketball, according to the NCAA.

Perhaps it was that strength of schedule that helped the Gophers close out the victory over Penn State.

"I think it's showing," Pitino said. "We've won, what, six of eight? Now you've got to do it on the road. We've done it at home."

To start the night, the Gophers struggled mightily on defense. Combine that with the fact that Penn State didn't turn the ball over at all in the first half, plus they got some quick points at the free-throw line. Penn State also shot 60% in the first half, making 5-of-10 from beyond the arc as well.

The Gophers also drained five 3-pointers in the first half and won the free-throw battle with 13-of-15 shots. Still, Penn State's hot shooting mixed with poor defense and scoreless droughts had the Gophers trailing at halftime, even if it was just 46-44.

"We didn't play great defense in the first half. We allowed them to do whatever they want," Pitino said. "And I told them at halftime, you can't allow the other team to dictate the rules, especially in your building. You've got to take it to them.

"And obviously our defense in the second half was exceptional."

The second half started in a similar fashion though, with an 8-2 Penn State run before the Gophers started to get back into the game. The defense in the first half was "unacceptable," Carr said.

"That was just something we had to turn around very quickly," Carr said. "And honestly, even the first four minutes of the second half, we still weren't getting it done. But after that we buckled down and knew we had to get this tough win."

Then Gabe Kalscheur, who struggled again from long range, going 0-for-7, hit a bucket to get back within two at 58-56. Pitino directed the 9,714 fans in attendance to get on their feet and cheer by raising his arms in the air. It was one of multiple times The Barn grew loud.

Then Penn State started to miss its shots. A basket from Alihan Demir, two of his nine points on the night, got the Gophers back in front at 61-59. Minnesota continued to gain momentum with a 13-1 run as Penn State missed 13 consecutive shots. Penn State shot just 7-for-29 in the second half.

"Our shooters had good shots," said Penn State coach Patrick Chambers. "They're not going in right now."

The Gophers took advantage of the Penn State miscues. They made 23-of-29 free throws. They grabbed 48 total rebounds and 30 defensive rebounds. Oturu finished with another double-double with 26 points and 14 boards.

And what made the second half so different than the first?

“We defended and we rebounded,” Pitino said. “We kept a big, physical team off the offensive glass. And turned them over. They had zero turnovers in the first half. We turned them over six times.

“That was huge.”

## HEATHER RULE



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