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Court Storm: Gophers Upset No. 3 Ohio State



Photo Credit: Harrison Barden (USA Today Sports)



By [Heather Rule](#) - December 15, 2019

The whole storming-the-playing-surface thing is getting to be a regular occurrence at the University of Minnesota lately.

First, it was a football win over Penn State last month. Then it was the Gophers' men's basketball team's turn Sunday night after it upset No. 3-ranked and previously undefeated Ohio State at Williams Arena.

A signature 84-71 win over a top-five team? You betcha fans stormed the court.

"I don't even think anyone was prepared for it," said Gophers coach Richard Pitino. "It was almost like, 'Oh wow, we just beat one of the best teams in the country. Let's go do it.'"

12/15/19: Richard Pitino responds after Gophers' upset over Ohio State



It's the first Gophers victory over a top-five team since they topped No. 5 Maryland on Feb. 18, 2016 at Williams Arena.

It wasn't like Sunday's game was a close contest in which the Gophers squeaked out a win. Nope. The Gophers pulled off the upset looking anything like an underdog pretty much from start to finish. They grabbed a 38-29 halftime lead and extended their lead into the double digits for much of the second half. Ohio State coach Chris Holtmann said it wasn't a game where his team got within reach.

"They were physically tougher," Holtmann said.

It was quite the bounce-back game for the Gophers in their Big Ten home-opener after a 20-point blowout loss at Iowa on Dec. 9 to open the conference schedule.

The Gophers (5-5, 1-1) came into Sunday's game with a record below .500 and staring at a team on the opposing bench that came into the barn with an undefeated record, a high ranking and one of the best defenses in the country.

No matter. In the pregame huddle, Gophers' Marcus Carr recalled Pitino telling his team that they could beat anybody in the conference.

"And I went ahead and said, 'We can beat any team in the country,'" Carr said. "I know we haven't been playing like it. I know we didn't start off the season the way we wanted to, but at the end of the day, me and my guys and the coaches, we all have that belief within each other. And that's the biggest thing."

Carr was undoubtedly the star of the game. After finishing with only two points in Iowa, he dazzled against Ohio State with a career-high 35 points – with 28 of them coming in the second half – as he shot 12-for-17 from the floor, including 3-for-6 from beyond the arc and making 8-of-9 free throws. The redshirt sophomore guard and Toronto native, who played his freshman season in Pittsburgh, set his previous career-high in points just two games ago with 24 against Clemson.

Holtmann said Carr "played a whale of a game." Pitino said it was a terrific performance from Carr.

"I thought that every time we needed a basket, whether it was a big three or getting to the rim, he did that," Pitino said.

12/15/19: Marcus Carr after going off for 35 points in upset victory vs. ...



The crowd was on its feet again with less than seven minutes to play. Carr came up with a steal and a fast-break layup to push the lead to 18 points – tied for the biggest of the game – at 67-49.

Sophomore Gabe Kalscheur finished with 15 points, and sophomore center Daniel Oturu had a double-double with 14 points and 13 rebounds. It took Oturu a bit to get going, but once he did, he was quite the force. He led the Gophers in scoring at the half with eight points.

As a whole, the Gophers simply outplayed Ohio State (9-1, 1-1). While the Gophers shot better than 50 percent in each half, finishing at 54.4% for the game going 31-for-57, the Buckeyes struggled to get their percentages out of the 30s. They shot only 34.5 percent in the first half and went 23-for-60 from the floor for the game (38.3%).

“Just from start to finish, we played the right way offensively, defensively,” Pitino said. “I thought our effort level was terrific. And we competed our butts off.”

D.J. Carton led Ohio State’s scoring with 19 points. The Gophers held junior Kaleb Wesson, who got into foul trouble early in the second half, to 12 points while getting him to turn the ball over six times.

The game started off fairly close, with some back-and-forth lead changes. But after a timeout with 11:43 left in the first half – with Ohio State up 14-13 – the Gophers found their rhythm to open up a lead they would never relinquish.

A couple of quick 3s sent them on a quick 6-0 scoring run. Then Kalscheur drained another one from beyond the arc for a 22-16 lead. That brought most of the 9,854 in attendance at The Barn to their feet. Another bucket from Williams made it 24-16, and the place went crazy as Ohio State took a timeout.

The Buckeyes were staring at the wrong side of an 11-2 scoring run and a six-minute field-goal drought.

A nine-point deficit at the half was the largest for the Buckeyes this season; the only other time they trailed at the break was in the season-opening 64-56 win over Cincinnati. The 38 points from the Gophers also marked the most Ohio State has allowed in the first half this year.

If Ohio State's plan was to come out with some momentum in the second half, Carr made sure to squash that idea. As it did very early on, Ohio State responded quickly with a 3-pointer. But Carr later drained one of his own for a 43-32 Gophers lead, giving him the first five points for the Gophers out of the break to help them keep up the pace.

Both Carr and Oturu mentioned last year's win over Purdue when reflecting on the court-storming experience. It was pretty cool to have it happen Sunday, too, Carr said.

"It was kind of a cool feeling leading up to it in the last minute or so, once the game was pretty much decided," Carr said.

Oturu also talked about his teammate Carr's game, saying he's been a "big advocate for my boy here." Putting up 35 points on a No. 3 team is tough, Oturu said.

"For him to be able to play how he did today was really special because, one, it helped us really win and two, this is, I feel like a coming-out party for him," Oturu said. "And people should start taking notice."

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