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Home / College / Gophers Rally Past Buckeyes

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By **Heather Rule** Like 8 Tweet Save Updated: March 18, 2016



ABOUT HEATHER RULE

 Heather's love for watching hockey started when the Minnesota Wild came to town in 2000. Before that, she caught a few Minnesota Moose games as a youngster, and more recently she's kept up with the Austin Bruins and Fargo Force. She's a writer, freelance journalist and blogger who previously worked as a news reporter in Austin and Fergus Falls, Minn. She enjoys watching sports and closely follows the Wild, Minnesota Twins, IndyCar Series, tennis and prep sports. Heather keeps up her sports blog **Thoughts from the Stands**. You can follow her on Twitter @hrrule.

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Minnesota's 4-goal third period vaults them to Big Ten Championship game

St. Paul – It's all about "getting that first goal," said Minnesota coach Don Lucia.

Sounds simple and obvious enough.

"It took us a while to find the rhythm," Lucia said. "We needed the one goal to kind of get us going."

That theory really rang true for the Gophers as the No. 1 seed managed a four-goal third period for a comeback victory over No. 4 seed Ohio State (14-18-4) in the semifinals of the Big Ten Tournament Friday at Xcel Energy Center.

The Minnesota Gophers (20-16-0) propelled themselves to the championship game behind a three-point effort from freshman winger Tyler Sheehy and a two-goal night from junior Taylor Cammarata. Lucia said they usually rely on three main guys for scoring goals, but this game felt different.

"If we were going to win tonight, somebody else was going to have to step forward," Lucia said. "Guys that maybe haven't scored on a nightly basis really came through in the clutch."

Cammarata came into the game with five goals on the season. In the third period Friday, he took about five minutes to add a couple more to his total.



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Sheehy was a big factor in Cammarata's pair of goals. On the first one, he created a turnover and passed it to Cammarata who was all alone in front and put a laser shot past the goalie. On the next one, Sheehy banked a pass along the boards from his own zone up to Cammarata.

That made the game 4-1.

Sheehy got the Gopher goal train chugging 1:36 into the third off a 2-on-1 opportunity. He held the puck into the zone, drove the net, took the shot himself and beat Ohio State goalie Christian Frey on the high glove side.

That opened the floodgates.

"It's amazing how a goal can just kind of ignite you," Lucia said.

The players knew what they needed to do, Sheehy said.

"After that (first goal), we were kind of rolling from there," Sheehy said.

Junior Vinni Lettieri picked a fine time for his seventh goal of the season. With the game tied 1-1, he scored that all-important next goal about four minutes later, putting Minnesota up for good before Cammarata added his pair of goals.

Ohio State's David Gust scored with 2:16 left in the game to make it 4-2. Minnesota won the shots on goal battle 45-29.

The third period was definitely a turnaround from the first two, as the Gophers were down 1-0 at the 13-minute mark of the first. They weren't executing, Lucia said, that included a lot of missed passes and pucks bouncing around over sticks.

Minnesota also failed to capitalize on a five-minute major power play in the first period. Ohio State's Joshua Dakota checked Minnesota freshman winger Ryan Norman from behind and also received a game misconduct penalty. Lucia said after the game that the one hit took both players out of the game.

It was the third consecutive year Ohio State and Minnesota met in the Big Ten Tournament semifinals. With the Gophers winning 3-0 last year and the Buckeyes with a 3-1 win in 2014. It was the first time this season the matchup wasn't a one-goal game. Three of the four regular season games went to overtime, with the Gophers winning each of them.

The Gophers snapped the Buckeye's eight-game unbeaten stretch.

"Our guys weren't going to quit until the horn went off," said Ohio State coach Steve Rohlik.

The Gophers are looking to make it two in a row for Big Ten Tournament titles. They beat Michigan 4-2 in the title game last year.

The two will meet again in the championship game at 7 p.m. Saturday at the X. Michigan, the No. 2 seed and ranked No. 7 nationally, beat Penn State 7-2 in the early semifinal Friday.

"It's going to be another good battle tomorrow night," Sheehy said.

Other tidbits:

Junior defenseman Jake Bischoff played his 100th career game Friday. He had three shots on goal and was a -1.

Minnesota was the only Big Ten team Ohio State did not beat this season.

Sheehy's 12th goal leads Minnesota freshmen.

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