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# With the odds seemingly against them, Gophers upset No. 15 Purdue

By [Heather Rule](https://web.archive.org/web/20170713021210/http://www.1500espn.com/author/heather-rule/) | [@hlrule](https://twitter.com/hlrule)[January 2, 2017 12:49 am](https://web.archive.org/web/20170713021210/https://twitter.com/hlrule)

What a response. What a game. The Gophers beat No. 15 Purdue on the road Sunday, 91-82 in overtime.

The victory will rank highly on the upset scale, especially considering the Gophers (13-2, 1-1 Big Ten) hadn't won at Purdue since Feb. 26, 2005. Plus, it likely came as quite the surprise to a lot of people.

The buzz and chatter surrounding the Gophers was a bit doom-and-gloom this week after they dropped their Big Ten opener at home, 75-74 in overtime to Michigan State. The Gophers were favored, it was a very winnable game in which they gave away a 13-point lead and winning at home in this conference is obviously essential.

That 0-1 start brought out the negativity with a one-that-got-away vibe. Couple that with the hype going into Sunday's game against a very good, ranked Purdue team in West Lafayette, and the season might as well have been over already. With Purdue's 6-foot-9 Caleb Swanigan and 7-foot-2 Isaac Haas, the Gophers had a very tough task ahead, no doubt.

It turned into one of those games where fans are left saying: "That's why they don't decide these games on paper." Not only were the Gophers not blown out by the Boilermakers (12-3, 1-1), a team that beat Iowa 89-67 Wednesday, they held the lead for most of the game on their way to victory. They even survived Swanigan's 28 points and 22 rebounds.

In a game like this one, grabbing the momentum early, or at least not getting into a huge deficit, can make or break a game plan. Luckily, the Gophers couldn't have started off any hotter.

They made their first 8 shots from the floor, including a 3-pointer from Jordan Murphy for an 11-2 lead before pushing it to 17-4. They just didn't miss anything for the first few minutes. It was a very fast start, though it was so good you just knew they'd fall back down to earth eventually.

Purdue being the powerhouse team it is, the Boilermakers found their game after that and used a 7-0 run to get right back into the game. Purdue had the momentum, and it seemed like maybe the first few minutes of the first half was all the fight the Gophers would have before their opponent went to work.

Not true. The Gophers took back their double-digit lead, capped with a one-handed slam from Dupree McBrayer for a 29-19 lead. The Gophers held a 3-point lead at the half.

They also did a good job of responding. In the overall picture, this game was a good response to Tuesday's loss. But even in Sunday's game, they responded well to big plays from Purdue. If they hit a 3-pointer, there was Nate Mason with the answer. Amir Coffey, who only had 8 points, was also clutch with the shots he did hit, going 2-for-2 from beyond the arc. One of those was a quick answer that tied the game late.

As good as the game's start was for the Gophers, the second half wasn't quite the same. Murphy hit another 3-pointer early, but Purdue went on another 7-0 run and took its first lead of the game about 3:30 into the second on a Carsen Edwards 3-pointer.

Again, it would have been completely understandable to see the Gophers lose focus and let Purdue keep the lead the rest of the way on the path to victory. They didn't score for about five minutes while it looked like Purdue went to work. The Gophers were in this game though. If they got into a little trouble, they didn't let it balloon into a large hole.

Thank Mason, because he was a major part of that. He finished the game with a career-high 31 points, made 11-of-18 field goals, 11 assists and 6 rebounds. He dished the ball over to McBrayer on his slam dunk. With just a 3-point lead in the closing minutes, he came through with a lay-up and the free throw. He also scored 5 points in overtime.

Coach Richard Pitino has said that Mason is one of the best guards in the Big Ten. Just point to Sunday's game as exhibit A.

Another player shouldn't get overlooked after this game either: Freshman Eric Curry. He was absolutely clutch in overtime, scoring the first two baskets for the Gophers in overtime, then draining a 3-pointer that was really the back-breaker, putting his team up by nine at 84-75 with under a minute to play in the extra session. The Gophers tallied 11 points to Purdue's 0 in overtime.

Curry had 10 points for the game, with 7 of those in overtime. It was a big-time performance for the youngster. Murphy scored 16 points, including a pair of 3-pointers which are a bit rare for his game, and added 6 rebounds. Reggie Lynch scored 10, had 5 blocks and 6 boards before fouling out in the closing seconds of overtime. Murphy and Bakary Konate also fouled out of the game, but it didn't turn into a huge issue for the Gophers.

So for all those that were ready to pack in the season after the heartbreaking overtime loss to Michigan State, perhaps this win at Purdue can more than make up for that. After these first two Big Ten games, the Gophers are 1-1, like many predicted, it was just a different route to get there - with an upset win in the process.

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- *Topgunn*  
What. A. Game. This was the kind of signature win that we've been waiting ages for the football team to come up with. Pitino's boys play an exciting brand of basketball. Mason was sensational yesterday. (Swanigan would look good in a T-Wolves jersey). They may or may not make the tournament, but they look like they will be in just about every game this season. The excitement is back in The Barn.
  - *bruno55*  
Great win by this young Gopher squad with great leadership from the upperclassmen . they took their lumps last year , but this year they are showing the poise that it will take to make some noise in the Big Ten.
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