

Ohio State 76, California 70: Blocked shots bother Bears

Lauderdale has 7 of 11 swatted by Buckeyes; Turner dominates on offense

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NEW YORK -- That zone defense the Ohio State men's basketball team resuscitated in Madison Square Garden the past two days?

A temporary solution, coach Thad Matta indicated after a 76-70 win over California in the consolation game of the 2K Sports Classic benefiting Coaches vs. Cancer.

"I was a little more worried about the quick turnaround and the effort and energy (the loss to North Carolina the previous night) took out of us," Matta said.

"I'm not saying it's easier to play zone, (that) you don't have to play as hard. But I was worried about foul trouble."

The zone that Matta employed for the last 25 minutes against North Carolina on Thursday was mostly in force again yesterday as the No. 15 Buckeyes built a 24-point second-half lead over the No. 13 Golden Bears.

The real difference in the defense, though, wasn't a style but the substance supplied by Dallas Lauderdale in the middle of it.

The 6-foot-8 junior, starting for the first time since his return after suffering a broken bone in his right hand, tied his career high with seven blocked shots, and the Buckeyes (3-1) salvaged a split of the two games they played in less than 24 hours.

"I think this was a great test to see where I was at," Lauderdale said. "I feel I got better during the course of the tournament, and I've just got to keep getting better from here."

Because of Lauderdale's presence, California (2-2) shot better outside the arc (43.5 percent) than inside (36.3 percent), having no more success going against him than it did against Syracuse's long athletes in a semifinal Thursday. Ohio State blocked 11 shots.

"The blocked shots were huge," Cal coach Mike Montgomery said. "We got the ball point-blank (at the basket), and we got it blocked."

Lauderdale, who was not cleared medically to play until the second game of the season Nov. 12, played a season-high 30 minutes.

"Dallas has been inching his way back in," Matta said. "This has been a pretty good run for him through the two days here. He didn't have a lot of practice coming into this."

"He definitely gives us a different look both offensively and defensively. He's got pretty good timing, and it allows us to do a little more on the perimeter, knowing he's back there."

Evan Turner had his fourth consecutive double-double with 26 points and 14 rebounds to lead Ohio State, and three other players scored in double figures.

Point guard Jerome Randle had 26 points to lead Cal, which cut the 24-point deficit to six with five minutes left. The Buckeyes committed seven turnovers and missed four free throws in about eight minutes.

"We kind of let our foot off the gas and started coasting a little bit," David Lighty said. "That's something we have to work on not happening."

Although Turner committed four of those turnovers and missed the front end of a one-and-one, Matta put the ball in his hands down the stretch, and he scored 10 of Ohio State's last 11 points. Turner had the Buckeyes' only field goals in the last 15 minutes and scored 18 of their last 22 points.

"He's a guy that we've got to lean on at times to kind of carry us through," Matta said.

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