

No. 3 Ohio State Rolls Over Bryant, 86-48

No. 3 Buckeyes pulled away early to beat Bryant on Wednesday night.

[box score](#)

COLUMBUS, Ohio (AP) - When opposing teams scout No. 3 Ohio State, they seldom notice Lenzelle Smith Jr.

Buckeyes coach Thad Matta hopes they keep ignoring him.

Smith scored 19 points and No. 3 Ohio State pulled away early to beat Bryant 86-48 on Wednesday night.

"I think Lenzelle has been tremendous - nobody's asked me about him this year," Matta said. "But I think he's playing at a very, very high level of being a complete basketball player."

Smith, a 6-foot-4 senior guard who does a little of everything, hit 6 of 9 shots from the field including half of his four 3-point attempts. He had eight rebounds and three assists.

"I put a lot of work into my game offensively over the summer. And my confidence is off the charts," he said. "My teammates are stretching the defense and are able to find me wide open. A lot of teams, for some reason, are (not guarding) me and I'm getting great looks at the basket. I'm just driving my legs and trying to get the most arc I can on the ball - and it's falling."

There isn't much about Smith that grabs people's attention.

Point guard Aaron Craft is the tough guy who may be as good a defender on the ball as anyone in the country. Swingman LaQuinton Ross is 6-8 with a velvet shooting touch. Sam Thompson comes off the bench to make high-flying dunks. Shannon Scott and big man Amir Williams are game-changing defenders.

And then there's Smith. He leads the Buckeyes (9-0) in scoring with 12.9 points a game. He's shooting 53 percent from the field, 48 percent behind the arc and 74 percent at the free throw line. He adds 5.1 rebounds and 1.5 assists per game - and may be Ohio State's best help defender.

"They're so talented. That's what's hard about playing them," Bryant coach Tim O'Shea said. "Who do you really want to leave open? They're just an elite team; a very, very, very elite team."

Williams added 12 points and nine rebounds for the Buckeyes, who rolled from the outset of the early round game in the Blackrock Gotham Classic. It will conclude on Dec. 21 with the Buckeyes meeting Notre Dame at Madison Square Garden.

The Bulldogs (6-5) hung around with the Buckeyes for a while, but then went scoreless over the last 5:25 of the first half and watched the Buckeyes close with an 8-0 run to take a 43-23 lead. Ohio State then scored the first five points of the second half before Dan Garvin's layup ended a drought of 6:40.

By then, it was all over.

Ohio State has lost focus from time to time against lesser teams after it has taken a big early lead. Not this time.

"That was one of the things we talked about in shootaround - trying to sustain intensity and effort and to keep the focus on the things that we need to get better at," Matta said. "We did a pretty decent job with that."

Dyami Starks had 16 points for Bryant, which was playing its second game in three nights. The Bulldogs lost at Notre Dame, 70-59, on Monday night.

Starks came in averaging 22.1 points a game, eighth-best in Division I. He had scored at least 20 in five games and 30 in three others. But he was held to 5-of-15 shooting from the field.

The Buckeyes led 8-7 early and then scored 14 of the next 18 points to take command. For the game, they shot 52 percent on 32 of 61. They hit 8 of 20 3-pointers (40 percent).

With Ohio State denying points inside or off the break, Bryant shot 28 percent from the field (16 of 58). It was 6 of 24 from behind the arc.

"I looked at the scores coming in and very few teams have scored 60 points on them - and they play fast," O'Shea said. "So I do think that defensively they play national-championship caliber defense."

The Bulldogs dropped to 0-5 all-time against Big Ten opponents. Talk about a tough schedule: They played preseason No. 1 Indiana in the opener a year ago - in their first official game in Division I. They lost that game 97-54.

The Buckeyes appear to have everything clicking right now.

"We're making great finds, we're reading each other," Smith said. "We have great guards on the perimeter and we're able to attack the defense and penetrate and kick the ball out. That's what you want to do. Our shooting has increased over the last three or four games and we want to just keep rolling."