

No. 3 Ohio State Defeats North Dakota State, 79-62

Ross, Smith each score 18 points.

box score

COLUMBUS, Ohio (AP) - It wasn't like North Dakota State could sneak up on No. 3 Ohio State.

After watching film of the Bison pull off a huge upset at Notre Dame on Wednesday night, there was no way the Buckeyes were going to be on anything but high alert.

LaQuinton Ross and Lenzelle Smith Jr. each scored 18 points and the Buckeyes never trailed in rolling over NDSU 79-62 Saturday night.

"I said it after the game on Wednesday, so much for tip-toeing into Ohio State," NDSU coach Saul Phillips said. "We kind of clomped in here with big old (size) 16s on and they clocked us pretty good."

The Buckeyes (9-0) continued their hot shooting. They made 53 percent from the field, pushing them over 50 percent for the fifth game in a row.

Freshman Mark Loving had a career-high 12 points, and Sam Thompson also had 12. Aaron Craft added six points and seven assists - setting a school record for career assists with 581 for the Buckeyes.

Asked if the Buckeyes got a good look at what the Bison had done to the Fighting Irish, Craft said they'd watched the video like they were film critics.

"Absolutely," he said. "Probably the best thing for us was that they beat Notre Dame and that really got our attention. Not that we try to really overlook anyone, but we got to sit down and see them play at their best. And we wanted to come out and play our best."

The game was part of the BlackRock Gotham Classic.

Taylor Braun led the Bison (7-4) with 21 points, while Marshall Bjorklund had 12 and Lawrence Alexander 10. NDSU shot 42 percent from the field and was outrebounded 36-26.

The Bison were coming off a 73-69 victory at Notre Dame, the program's first win against an ACC team. That win came against a Fighting Irish squad that was 124-10 at home over the last six-plus seasons.

"They had some really big guys that can get up and that altered some shots inside," Braun said. "I don't think we expected them to shoot as well as they did from the 3-point line. That was a real difference in the game."

The Buckeyes were 6 for 11 behind the arc in the first half and finished 10 of 20. The threat of hitting outside shots opened up things underneath.

Down by as many as 19 points against the Buckeyes, the Bison went on a 7-2 run to pull within 14 midway through the second half.

But Craft, who also had four steals and four rebounds, came up with a loose ball and fed Thompson, who was thrown to the floor by Bjorklund.

Thompson hit both free throws after the flagrant foul, and then on the resulting possession, Craft lobbed an alley-oop to Thompson for a dunk that brought the crowd to its feet.

Loving then hit back-to-back 3s and the lead was back up to 65-43 with 8 1/2 minutes left.

"I was up all night a couple of nights ago trying to find a weakness," Phillips said. "And then I realized they really don't have a lot (of them)."

The Bison were playing a ranked Division I opponent for only the seventh time. They've lost the last five since beating No. 13 Wisconsin and No. 9 Marquette in 2006.

Ohio State built a 41-28 lead at the break. Ross overcame a sluggish start with 13 points while Smith had 10.

The Buckeyes closed the first half with a 7-0 burst.

Ross got a pass from Craft and buried a 3. After a Bison miss, Thompson hit a foul shot. Off another miss, Craft drove the lane and then twisted to fire a pass from underneath the basket to Thompson in the left corner. He put up a 3 that caught only net with 1.7 seconds left.

That final pass tied Craft with Jamar Butler for the career record at Ohio State with 579 assists.

Then on the Buckeyes' first possession of the second half, Craft found Ross all alone under the basket for the record-breaker and a 43-28 lead.

"Ever since I've been here I've had the easy job," the senior point guard said. "I've played with a lot of great players, a lot of great shooters, who have done the hard part. I just have to find those guys and put them in a great opportunity to score. I'll have a lot of time to think about (this) when I get older. By the time I'm a grandfather, it'll probably be about 800 assists in my career."

Ohio State can't move up in the coaches poll on Phillips' ballot.

"You know, in the coaches' poll they only had one first-place vote. Guess who that first-place vote was," he said. "And that didn't change my mind tonight."