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(Neb)-NU Women Rally To Beat Purdue

By: John Axtell Posted at: 02/10/2019 04:31 PM

Leigha Brown, Kate Cain, Nicea Eliely Photo - Scott Bruhn/Nebraska Communications

Courtesy - NU Athletic Communications [Final Box Score](#)

Lincoln - Freshman Leigha Brown erupted for 22 of her career-high 30 points in the second half to help Nebraska rally from a 10-point third-quarter deficit on its way to a 67-61 women's basketball win over Purdue on Sunday afternoon at Pinnacle Bank Arena.

Brown, a 6-1 wing from Auburn, Indiana, pumped in 13 points in the fourth quarter including six points in the final minute to help the Huskers earn a season series sweep of the Boilermakers. Nebraska improved to 6-7 in the Big Ten and 11-13 overall while setting a school record with its 12th game of the season decided by two possessions or less.

Nebraska, which had lost five straight games decided by six or fewer points, finally notched its second narrow win of the Big Ten season, joining a 63-57 victory over then-No. 23 Minnesota on Jan. 20.

Trailing by eight points early in the fourth at 50-42, Nebraska got seven straight points from Brown to change the momentum. The Huskers forced the fourth foul on Boilermaker guard Dominique Oden with just over eight minutes left, and Brown immediately knocked down a three over Oden with 8:03 left to cut the margin to 54-49.

Purdue called timeout with 7:56 left to protect Oden, who finished with 10 points, from fouling out. Nebraska was able to cut more lead with Oden on the bench. Sam Haiby, who finished with seven points, got four points around a Kate Cain bucket to help the Huskers climb within 57-55 with 4:11 left.

Oden returned, but Purdue's offense was still stuck in neutral with only two field goals in the first 9:30 of the fourth quarter.

Cain, who finished with six of her eight points in the game in the fourth quarter, scored on back-to-back baskets at 2:31 and 1:44 to give Nebraska its first lead of the half at 59-58.

Then Brown hit the game's biggest shot with her three-pointer at the one-minute mark to push the Husker lead to 62-58. On the ensuing possession, Brown pulled down a huge defensive rebound and was immediately fouled by Oden - her fifth - with 45.8 seconds left. Brown stepped to the line and sank both free throws to push NU's lead to 64-58.

Kayana Traylor sank a three with 23 seconds to keep Purdue within reach, but a free throw by Brown with 21.9 left, and two free throws by Kissinger with 9.3 seconds left gave the Huskers the 67-61 win.

Brown's 30 points came on 8-of-14 shooting from the field, including 4-of-6 threes, while she also knocked down 10-of-12 free throws. In the most aggressive game of her young career, Brown drew nine fouls on Purdue players. She added four rebounds and two steals in 24 minutes on the day.

Brown became the first Husker in two seasons to produce 30 points in a game, and the first Nebraska guard to get 30 points since Natalie Romeo had 30 points against Wisconsin on Jan. 27, 2016.

While Brown's offense carried the Huskers in the second half, junior Nicea Eliely set the tone for the Nebraska defense. Eliely finished with nine points, five rebounds, three blocks and two steals. In a low-scoring first half, Eliely helped keep the Huskers close.

Kissinger added eight points and four rebounds for the Big Red, but did not hit a three in the game. Hannah Whitish, who scored 28 points in an 84-64 win at Purdue on Jan. 31, went scoreless in the rematch but finished with five assists and five rebounds. Most of her assists came in the final period as Nebraska executed well down the stretch to outscore the Boilermakers 25-13.

Freshman Kayla Mershon also played a major role on the defensive end for the Huskers, finishing with five rebounds, two steals and a block along with two assists and Nebraska's only other three-pointer on the afternoon.

For the game, Nebraska hit 38.5 percent (20-52) of its shots from the field, including 5-of-13 threes (.385), while knocking down 22-of-28 free throws (.786). The Huskers also won the turnover battle, 19-14.

Purdue, which was led by 13 points apiece from Ae'Rianna Harris and Karissa McLaughlin, hit 40 percent (22-55) of its shots, including 5-of-16 threes (.313), while connecting on 12-of-14 free throws (.857). Purdue out-rebounded Nebraska 36-31, including a game-high 14 rebounds from Tamara Farquhar.

Nebraska trailed 28-23 at the half. After a relatively high-scoring first quarter where Purdue took a 20-14 lead, the Huskers and Boilermakers got stuck in a defensive slugfest in the second quarter. Nebraska outscored Purdue 9-8 in the period, holding Purdue to just one field goal in the first 6:40 of the period. Unfortunately, the Huskers were only able to manage five points during the same span.

Nebraska shot just 33.3 percent (9-27) in the first half, but did hit 5-of-7 first-half free throws. The Huskers, who forced 11 Purdue turnovers, got nine points, four rebounds, three blocks and two steals from Eliely in the half. Leigha Brown added eight points and a steal off the bench for the Huskers.

Neither team hit a three-pointer in the first half, but the Boilermakers knocked down 13-of-27 field goals (.481) and both of their free throw attempts. Purdue out-rebounded Nebraska 19-14 in the half and forced nine turnovers by the Huskers. Oden led Purdue with eight first-half points, while McLaughlin pitched in seven points.

Nebraska returns to Big Ten road action on Thursday, when the Huskers take on No. 10 Maryland. Tip-off between the Big Red and the Terrapins at the Xfinity Center in College Park is set for 7 p.m. (CT) with live television coverage from the Big Ten Network.