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By JAMES W. WADE III

Staff Reporter

This was a stellar weekend for the Ohio State University (OSU) Men's Basketball Team. Cleveland's own David Lightly and the Buckeyes were ranked number 1 most of the year.

The Buckeyes (34-2) have been playing title-worthy ball this year, but this was at least the fourth time the Buckeyes seemed to play the best they could play - their 23-point home win against Purdue, their 21-point win at Penn State, their 28-point home win in the regular-season finale against Wisconsin.

William Buford scored 18 points and superstar freshman Jared Sullinger added 11 with Ohio State looking every inch the part of a No. 1 overall seed rolling to a 75-46 win over Texas-San

Antonio in the second round of the NCAA tournament Friday.

On Friday, the Buckeyes set an NCAA team record with 26 assists; Jon Diebler tied the Big Ten record with 10 3-pointers in a game at Penn State; and the final regular season win over Wisconsin included an NCAA-record 14-of-15 team performance from 3-point range.

The excitement of Quicken Loans Arena's 15,000 fans made it feel just like an OSU home game. Ohio State built a 16-point halftime lead, ballooned it to 38 in the second half and was never threatened by the No. 16 seed Roadrunners (20-14).

The blowout allowed Ohio State coach Thad Matta to rest his starters for Sunday's East region matchup with George Mason, a 61-57 winner over Villanova.

On Sunday playing in Cleveland proved to be a big advantage for OSU as the fans chanting "O-H-I-O" at every opportunity as the Buckeyes crushed George Mason 98-66.

Lighty was on fire and scored 25 points. He also made all seven of his 3-point tries, and 18 points each from Sullinger and Buford. Freshman point guard Aaron Craft had 15 assists, an Ohio State school record and the fourth-most in the history of the NCAA tournament.

Lightly was poised playing in front of friends and family. The Buckeyes shot a staggering 61.5 percent from the land of plenty, going 16-26. Diebler, Buford and Lighty were responsible for 15 of those buckets, so the usual suspects are staying hot at just the right time.

Ohio State destroyed any upset plans and moved closer to its first national title since 1960. The Buckeyes will meet Kentucky (27-8) in the East regional semifinals Friday in Newark, N.J.

Ohio State is 5-0 in NCAA tournament matchups with the Wildcats.

It took George Mason (27-7) grabbing an 11-2 lead at the start, and having a little too much fun with it in the eyes of the Buckeyes, to bring this out of Ohio State.

"We hadn't run into a team all season that talked that much," Lauderdale said. "We don't play that way, so we didn't talk any trash back. We just finished the game the way we finished the game. You saw what we did afterward."

"We're a team on a mission," OSU center Dallas Lauderdale said. "We're not trying to be seen as one of the greatest teams to ever play in college, we just want to go on and win the national championship."

The step, no, more like a stomp, on Sunday came the way it always comes when the Buckeyes are rolling – hot shooting and lockdown defense. After falling behind 11-2, the Big Ten champions used their devastating inside-outside attack to post the most lopsided tournament victory in school history.

Ohio State men's basketball head coach Thad Matta along with players David Lighty, Aaron Craft and Jared Sullinger talked with the media after they defeated George Mason in their East Region third round game of the NCAA Tournament at The Q in Cleveland.

The Buckeyes had a home crowd over the weekend, as The Q turned into a Columbus suburb, but it won't be that way in New Jersey.