



East Carolina 66, Savannah State 65

First Round: March 19, 2013

GREENVILLE, N.C. -- Miguel Paul made two free throws with 13 seconds left and Akeem Richmond stripped the ball from Rashad Hassen as time expired give East Carolina a 66-65 come-from-behind win over Savannah State in the first round of the CollegeInsiders.com Postseason Tournament (CIT) Tuesday night.

The win gave ECU its first-ever Division I postseason victory in five appearances. The Pirates, who joined the ranks of NCAA Division I for the 1965-66 season, had not won a postseason game since defeating Erskine to win the 1954 NAIA District 26 championship.

ECU will host a second round game Saturday at 5 p.m. against an opponent to be determined.

The Pirates (19-12) trailed by 15, 45-30, with 14 minutes to play before rallying to take a 64-63 lead on a 3-pointer by Paul with 47 seconds left. It was their first lead of the game.

Hassen regained the lead for Savannah State (19-15) with 25 seconds left as he scored in the paint, while being fouled. He had a chance to extend the lead to two, but was unable to complete the 3-point play, which gave the Pirates the opportunity to win.

"It's hard to get to postseason and to win a game it's really hard," ECU Head Coach Jeff Lebo said. "This is the only East Carolina Division I team that's won a postseason game in almost 50 years. That's quite an accomplishment.

Despite shooting less than 30 percent, missing nine free throws and committing eight turnovers in the first half, the Pirates trailed only by seven at halftime, 32-25 as they closed the half on a 10-2 run.

The Tigers didn't exactly set the world on fire in the first half either, shooting just 38 percent and committing eight turnovers themselves as the two teams combined for 16 turnovers and shot 34 percent (20-58).

After watching its deficit grow to 15, ECU used a 20-9 run over a 6:34 stretch to get within four, 54-50, with Richmond burying three consecutive 3s.

The Tigers extended their lead back to seven with 5:23 to play.

After being held scoreless in the first half, Paul seemed to understand the urgency of the moment and the possible finality of his career. He scored eight of ECU's final 12 points, making two 3s and a pair of free throws and assisting on both of its other two field goals.

He finished the game with 14 points and nine assists, eclipsing the 200-assist mark for the season.

After his first 3 cut the Pirates' deficit to four, his dishes to Robert Sampson and Maurice Kemp brought ECU within one, setting the stage of his final minute heroics.

Kemp led the Pirates with 21 points and Richmond added 14. Sampson led all rebounders with 14 boards.

Deven Williams paced the Tigers with 18 points and Arnold Louis contributed 15.