



NJIT 84, NEW HAMPSHIRE 77

First Round, Monday March 16, 2015

NEWARK, NJ—NJIT outscored visiting New Hampshire 52-40 in the second half Monday night and the Highlanders came away with an 84-77 men's basketball victory in front of a standing room only crowd in the Fleisher Athletic Center in the opening round of the national CollegenInsider.com Tournament (CIT).

Trailing at the half, 37-32, NJIT (19-11) quickly erased the deficit at the outset of the second half. However, New Hampshire (19-12) used a 5-0 run to take a 52-47 lead with 12:10 remaining.

That would be the high-water mark for the visiting Wildcats, as NJIT then took control with a 13-0 run in the next 4:04, capped by a baseline dunk by Odera Nweke off of a feed from Damon Lynn that put the Highlanders in control, 60-52, with 8:06 remaining.

Monday's contest was the first-ever postseason game for NJIT at the Division I level and the first postseason men's basketball game ever for New Hampshire. The result extended NJIT's program Division I-best wins total to 19, while New Hampshire, which began basketball in the early 1900s, equaled the most victories in a season for UNH.

NJIT had four double-figure scorers, led by 25 points from Lynn, who shot 6-for-12 on 3-pointers, and a career-high 23 points from Tim Coleman.

Junior Ky Howard, in his second game back after missing 10 in a row due to injury, came close to NJIT's first Division I triple-double, scoring 10 points, pulling down a game-high 11 rebounds, and handing out a game-best 7 assists. Junior Winfield Willis scored 16 points for the Highlanders, including 10-for-10 at the foul line.

New Hampshire, the fourth-place team in the America East Conference and a 60-58 loser at eventual champion UAlbany in the AE Tournament semifinal, had five double-figure scorers against NJIT, with sophomore Jaleen Smith's 17 topping the Wildcats. Senior Matt Miller and sophomore Daniel Dion each scored 12 points for UNH, which also got 10 points apiece from sophomore Jacoby Armstrong and freshman Iba Camara.

In addition to the game-high 11 rebounds from NJIT's junior point guard Howard, Coleman grabbed 7 rebounds, while also notching a game-best 3 blocked shots.

Camara, a long 6-foot-9, 225-pound post player from Senegal, led UNH in rebounds with 9 and also had 3 assists, sharing the team lead in that department with Smith.

New Hampshire scored 10 points, including two 3-pointers, in the opening 3:06 before Lynn hit the first of what would be six 3-pointers to get NJIT on the scoreboard.

The Highlanders gradually climbed closer, but it wasn't until Coleman produced an old-school 3-point play with 4:51 left in the opening half that NJIT pulled even, 27-27.

The Wildcats answered with scores on their next two possessions and UNH stayed on top the rest of the half. On the final possession before halftime, the Wildcats got the ball with a 34-32 lead.

New Hampshire ran the clock down to the final couple of seconds, when Ronnel Jordan fired a long jump shot that NJIT's Coleman, on a closeout, blocked cleanly. However, the block went straight back to Jordan, whose buzzer-beating 3-point try swished through the net, giving his team a 37-32 lead at the break.

Jordan's 3-pointer gave his team a stat line of 7-for-13 from 3-point distance at the half and another key statistic showed the Wildcats with a 12-3 lead in points-off-turnovers, despite the fact that the Highlanders had committed just 6 miscues in the half.

Down at the break by 5 points, NJIT opened the second half at 7-2, with Lynn's 3-pointer tying the score at 39-39 less than three minutes out of halftime.

There would be three more ties in the ensuing 3:20 before New Hampshire staged a 5-0 run that gave the Wildcats a 52-47 advantage after two Smith foul shots with 12:10 left.

That would be the high point for the visitors, who saw the Highlanders take the lead for good at 53-52 on a Nweke layup with 10:45 left as part of the decisive 13-0 spurt.

NJIT eventually stretched its lead to a game-best 76-63 when Lynn hit two free throws with 2:09 remaining.

New Hampshire did not go away, however, as the Wildcats hit three 3-pointers in the last 2:02, including two by Keon Burns, who played one minute. His second triple trimmed the NJIT lead to 80-74 with 23 seconds left, but the Highlanders connected on 5-of-6 foul shots the rest of the way to put the win on ice.

Contrasted with their 12 points off of 6 NJIT turnovers in the opening half, the Wildcats 5 points off of NJIT turnovers in the second half.

On top of that, the visitors were 4-for-12 on second-half 3-point tries and they also struggled at the foul line in the second half, shooting 10-for-18 at the stripe.

NJIT, meanwhile, shot 56 percent (14-for-25) from the field and 21-for-27 at the foul line in controlling the second half.

With Monday's victory in the first national Division I postseason game of 2015, the Highlanders advance to the CIT round of 16.

The remaining first-round games will be played this week, with five on Tuesday, nine on Wednesday, and one on Thursday.

The CIT does not use a set bracket, with the second-round matchups determined and announced on completion of the first-round games. NJIT could be awarded another home game for the second round.