



Liberty wins the 2nd Annual Coach John McLendon Classic

First 20-win season for the Flames since 2009

LYNCHBURG, Va. – Liberty won its second postseason game in school history Monday night defeating Norfolk State 73-64 in the second annual John McLendon Classic in the CollegenInsider.com Tournament (CIT).

The Flames advance to the second round of the CIT after posting its first 20-win season since the 2008-09 season, during head coach Ritchie McKay's first stint at Liberty.

Liberty's Ryan Kemrite was named Most Valuable Player after scoring a career-high and setting a new John McLendon Classic record with 30 points, shooting 69.2 percent from the floor. He is the first Flame to score 30 points since Davon Marshall tallied 31 points at Longwood on Feb. 13, 2013. Right behind Kemrite in the scoring column was Lovell Cabbil with a career-high 25 points, also shooting 69.2 percent for the game to go along with three rebounds, three steals and an assist. Norfolk State was led by Jonathan Wade (22 points) and Zaynah Robinson (19) combining for 41 of the Spartans' 64 points.

"I think our guys did a great job, especially in the second half when we lost our way," McKay said. "To rally and come back was a good feeling. It is a great step in our process."

Liberty came out of the gates firing from beyond the arc, making eight threes in the first half, shooting 50 percent. Nine of Liberty's first 10 shot attempts were from three as the Flames first 12 points were from three point shots. Liberty was stingy on defense allowing Norfolk State to make just three field goals in the first 13 minutes of the game.

The Flames' solid defense in the first half led to Norfolk State committing 11 turnovers, which then led to Liberty scoring 15 points off turnovers. Despite having the height advantage down low in the paint, the Spartans barely outscored Liberty 10-6 in the paint in the first half.

Kick starting Liberty's offense in the first half was Kemrite scoring eight points in the first eight minutes of the game. From there, Cabbil took over with 17 points in the first half, shooting 75 percent in the first half and 66.6 percent from three-point range. Liberty closed the first half making seven of its last 10 field goal attempts to go into halftime with a 33-22 lead.

As a team, Liberty shot 52.4 percent in the first half with nine assists. Norfolk State shot 36.4 percent in

the first half with only three assists.

“We did a good job of getting paint touches and making the defense collapse. We were making the extra pass and that led to open shots,” Cabbil added. “This win is big because we are a young team that is looking to get some postseason experience knowing that one day we want to be in NCAA Tournament. This win means a lot because it is also our 20th win this season and we wanted to reach that milestone.”

The Spartans turned the corner early in the second half, outscoring Liberty 20-9 in the first six minutes and 44 seconds of the half to take a 44-42 lead over the Flames. Liberty quickly regained the lead and never looked back holding the Spartans to a 3:24 scoring draught. Norfolk State continued to struggle dealing with Liberty’s defense, as they were unable to make a field goal for eight minutes.

Offensively for the Flames, Kemrite took over in the second half with 19 points, shooting 6-8 from the field with a trio of three pointers. Despite not scoring in the game, John Dawson was effective on the court with a game-high eight assists to go along with a team-high four rebounds.

Liberty now advances to the second round of the CIT, which will begin on March 17 and will go through the 20th. An opponent, time and location has yet to be determined.