



## **Liberty gets past Samford to Advance to Quarterfinals**

*Flames get two postseason wins in same season for first time ever*

LYNCHBURG, VA – For the first time in school history, the Liberty men's basketball team has won two postseason games as the Flames defeated Samford 66-58 in the second round of the CollegeInsider.com Tournament (CIT), Monday evening at the Vines Center.

John Dawson filled the stat sheet with a team-high 15 points to go along with five rebounds and five assists for the Flames, who improve to 21-13. Freshman Georgie Pacheco-Ortiz scored 13 points while also leading the team in rebounds and assists with six each and committing just one turnover.

Liberty's balanced scoring attack saw five Flames reach double figures on the night, also including Lovell Cabbil (14 points), Ryan Kemrite (10 points) and Ezra Talbert (season-high 10 points).

"I felt like we did a good job managing the game, especially Georgie (Pacheco-Ortiz), he did great," Liberty Head Coach Ritchie McKay said. "What you do every day is more important than what you do every once in a while, and every day we try to guard you. We spend a lot of time practicing getting in the gaps and getting take-aways."

Samford's Demetrius Denzel-Dyson scored a game-high 19 points while Wyatt Walker posted a double-double with 12 points and 11 rebounds. The Bulldogs (20-16) were held 21 points below their season average as the Flames forced 16 turnovers, which led to 25 points.

"We kept doing what we do, controlling the tempo and pressuring shooters," Pacheco-Ortiz said. "I wouldn't say our defense was great but we made sure to pressure the ball and force mistakes."

After being named MVP in the John McLendon Classic one week earlier, Kemrite showed no rust as he got Liberty's offense going with five points in the first five minutes of the game. Dawson followed his lead, nailing back-to-back three pointers to put Liberty up 13-10 with 13 and a half minutes left in the first half.

Liberty went on a bit of a scoring drought over three minutes but its defense kept the team in the game. Coming off the bench to make an impact was Talbert with six points in the first four minutes he stepped onto the court.

Liberty's defense kicked it up a notch late in the first half, holding Samford on a 6:14 scoring drought as the Flames went on a 9-0 run. The Bulldogs did not make a field goal for 8:35 in total during that span. Liberty's defense forced eight turnovers in the first 20 minutes that led to 12 points for the Flames.

The Flames' last points in the first half came off a turnover as Myo Baxter-Bell ripped the ball from Samford's Walker that led to a breakaway layup to go into halftime with a 30-24 lead.

The Flames did an exceptional job of taking care of the ball in the first half, committing just two turnovers as Pacheco-Ortiz dished out five assists. Dawson led all players with nine points at the end of the first half while Samford's Denzel-Dyson was efficient on offense for the Bulldogs in the first half, scoring seven points. Liberty was able to limit Samford inside, allowing just eight points in the paint in the first half while scoring 12 points on the interior itself.

Both teams came out in the second half cold on offense, combining to commit five turnovers in the first two minutes. The Flames continued to frustrate the Bulldogs on offense, as they did not score on their first five possessions. During that stretch, Samford committed four straight turnovers as Liberty jumped out to a 34-24 lead.

Samford climbed back into the game, as the Bulldogs came within two points (36-34) with 13 minutes left in the game. The Flames responded with a quick 8-0 run sparked by back-to-back three pointers from Cabbil. Both teams were effective on offense in the second half as the two teams combined to shoot 51.6 percent (17-33) in the first 16 minutes of the period.

Once again, after Liberty claimed a double-digit lead, Samford cut it to single digits as the Bulldogs got within six points (62-56) with two minutes left. Liberty would hold off Samford's comeback attempt by limiting the Bulldogs to just two points the rest of the way to pull out the win.