



UMBC holds off Liberty to advance to the Semis

UMBC reaches 21 wins for just the second time in school history

BALTIMORE – UMBC has reached the semi-finals of the CollegeInsider.com Postseason Tournament, as the host Retrievers defeated Liberty, 80-68, at the RAC Arena on Sunday afternoon.

UMBC improved to 21-12, reaching the 21-win mark for just the second time in the school's 30-year Division I history. The 2007-08 America East championship team and NCAA qualifier holds the record for victories with 24.

Liberty's season came to a close at 21-14.

Five Retrievers scored in double figures, led by junior guard Jairus Lyles (Silver Spring, Md./DeMatha), who tallied 20 points. Lyles also added a game-high eight rebounds and added five assists. Senior forward Will Darley (Timonium, Md./Dulaney) came on strong down the stretch and finished with 18 points.

Junior guards K.J. Maura (San Juan, P.R.) and Rodney Elliott (Baltimore, Md./John Carroll) and sophomore forward Joe Sherburne (Whitefish Bay, Wis.) added 11 points apiece.

Liberty freshman guard Georgie Pacheco-Ortiz led all scorers with 23 points.

The Retrievers quickly built a 10-point halftime lead to 17, at 53-36, on a Darley trey with 16:02 remaining. But the Flames knocked down eight consecutive field goal attempts, including four treys, as part of a 21-7 run to slash the deficit to 60-57 with 10:23 remaining. Red-shirt freshman post Myo Baxter-Bell capped the surge with a pair of tough baskets in the paint.

The UMBC lead was 65-61 with 6:13 remaining when Darley hit a jumper from the right wing, and after a rare Pacheco-Ortiz miss, the lone Retriever active senior converted a traditional three-point play to restore the hosts' lead to 70-61 with 5:30 remaining.

Pacheco-Ortiz trimmed the deficit to 72-65 with two free throws at the 4:20 mark, but back-to-back treys by UMBC junior guard Jourdan Grant (Bowie, Md./Archbishop Spalding) and Elliott at the end of the shot clock put the game out of reach.

UMBC converted all 17 free throw attempts in the game, easily surpassing the previous record of 12-for-12 versus Penn in November of 2010.

The Retrievers hit over 50 percent from the floor in each half against a Liberty squad that entered the game allowing just 66.6 points per game. UMBC finished at 51 percent (26-of-51) from the field and knocked down 11 treys, surpassing the double figure mark for threes in a game for the 16th time in 33 games.

Liberty countered by shooting 45.1 percent from the floor (23-of-51), 42.9 percent from behind the arc (9-of-21) and 86.7 percent (13-of-15) from the stripe.

UMBC outrebounded Liberty, 31-23, and improved to 15-0 when outrebounding an opponent in 2016-17.

The lead changed hands 14 times in the first half. Liberty's last edge was at 27-26 after a trey by Ezra Talbert at the 3:47 mark of the first period, but the Retrievers closed the half on a 14-3 run to surge in front, 40-30, at the break. Lyles scored seven points in that surge, 13 in the first half and ended the frame with a driving layup to give the hosts the momentum at intermission.

Lyles became the third player in school history to surpass the 600-point plateau (604) in a single season and moved into 16 th place on UMBC's all-time scoring list with 1,086 points.

Furman, St. Peter's and Texas A&M-Corpus Christi join UMBC as 2017 CIT semi-finalists.