



Texas A&M Corpus Christi advances to Championship

Rashawn Thomas reaches 2,000-point plateau

BALTIMORE – A 50-point boon in the second half, powered by 15 from Rashawn Thomas and 14 from Kareem South, lifted Texas A&M-Corpus Christi to a 79-61 road victory at UMBC Wednesday night in the CollegenInsider.com Postseason Tournament Semifinals.

With the victory, the Islanders clinched their first-ever CIT Championship berth and will host the final Friday night at 8 p.m. in the Dugan Wellness Center.

The night started ice-cold for the Islanders who hit just 8 of their first 30 shots from the field. Even with the stagnant start, Corpus Christi trailed by just five at half. Everything changed in the second 20 minutes.

South ignited a barrage unlike anything the Islanders have unleashed this season as the Blue and Green shot a blistering 73-percent to hang 50 points on the Retrievers. The redshirt freshman was a perfect 5-for-5 from the field including 4-of-4 from downtown.

Thomas added to the stellar shooting performance with a 6-of-8 performance including a pair of threes. The senior led all scorers with 23 points and became the first Islander to ever score 2,000 points in his career.

"Believe it or not, I'm a little bit of a numbers guy," said head coach Willis Wilson. "The number that stood out to me at the half was we had 15 more field goal attempts. That says a lot. One, it says we're doing a lot of good things. We tried to identify those and continue doing those good things. The second thing it said was with that low of field goal percentage, we just weren't finishing plays and doing us.

"Us is playing inside out, playing through the paint," continued Wilson. "We just tried to get back to the things we do and the way we play and it sure paid off for us."

UMBC (21-13) hit six of its first 12 shots in the game to build an early edge over the cold-shooting Islanders. The Retrievers rode the early momentum and raucous home crowd to an eventual 10-point advantage with 4:42 to play in the half.

That lead held until the final two minutes of the opening half when the Blue and Green used a mini-run

to cut the deficit to just five at the break.

The Islanders roared out of the locker room and immediately caught fire, hitting seven of their first eight shots to turn the five-point deficit into a 10-point lead. South bookended the 18-3 run with a pair of three-pointers. Corpus Christi would never relinquish the lead.

UMBC closed the gap to just four with seven and a half minutes to play, but Corpus Christi had the answer. The Islanders would score the next 11 points, capped by South's half court heave as the crowd counted down a fake shot clock. In a half where the Islanders rarely missed, the heave naturally found the net.

From that point on, the Islanders cruised as the lead never fell below double digits. Ehab Amin scored nine of his 16 points in the second half onslaught. Joseph Kilgore went for seven in each half.

The Islanders forced 12 UMBC turnovers in the second half. 10 of those came on steals as the Blue and Green pillaged their way around the court to the tune of 14 thefts.

"I was so proud of our guys for the defensive effort," said head coach Willis Wilson. "I can't talk enough about going on the road and shutting down a good team like this the way we did in the second half. It speaks volumes to these guys' character and their willingness to buy in and stay with it. I'm just really excited about the effort we left on the floor today."

Jake Kocher set a career-high with seven steals to lead the Islanders. Five different players recorded a steal while Amin snapped a 20-year old Southland Conference record.