



MACON, Ga. – Senior Justin Cecil scored a game-high 19 points to lift the Mercer men's basketball team to a historic 68-60 victory over Tennessee State in Tuesday night's CollegeInsider.com Tournament first round game at the University Center. The Bears' triumph marked the team's first postseason win in the 110-year history of the program and tied a school record for single-season wins.

Mercer (23-11) advanced to the second round of the CIT and is set to host Georgia State at the University Center on March 17 at 4 p.m. Georgia State advanced to Saturday's second-round matchup by virtue of a 74-43 victory over Tennessee Tech on Tuesday evening at the GSU Sports Arena in Atlanta, Ga.

Mercer's 23rd win equals the program's single-season win benchmark set by the 2002-03 edition of the Bears (23-6). Tennessee State finished its season 20-13.

Cecil's 19 points came on the strength of four-of-12 shooting from three-point range in 24 minutes of work. Sophomore Daniel Coursey scored 16 points and tallied eight rebounds, five blocks and two assists in the win.

Both Cecil and Coursey did most of their damage in the second half, combining for 27 points in the final 20 minutes of play. Coursey finished the night a perfect eight-for-eight from the free throw line.

Sophomore Travis Smith also reached double figures in the scoring column, netting 10 points on two-of-four shooting from the floor. Smith was also perfect at the free throw line, canning all six of his charity tosses.

Midway through the first half, Mercer had a six point lead (13-7) before Tennessee State scored seven-straight points to take its first lead of the night with 6:24 left in the period. From there, the teams traded scores before the Tigers went into the break ahead 21-19.

Out of the break, Tennessee State looked poised to take control of the contest when junior Robert Covington drilled a three pointer 16 seconds in to give the Tigers their biggest lead of the evening.

Down by five, Mercer turned to its lone senior to lead a response. Cecil came through admirably, scoring the game's next seven points to put the Bears back in front with 18:30 on the clock.

Later in the half, the visitors were back on top by three before Mercer sophomore Langston Hall drilled three-pointers on two straight possessions. Hall's spurt put Mercer in front 47-44 with 8:25 to play, a lead the hosts would not

surrender.

Mercer's advantage grew to as many as 10 in the final minutes as Tennessee State struggled to mount a comeback. Sharp aim at the free-throw line snuffed out any opportunity for a close finish as Mercer canned 11 of its final 13 free throw attempts to secure victory.

All told, Mercer finished the game 20-of-24 at the free throw stripe. In contrast, Tennessee State was just seven-for-11 on its free throw attempts.

Mercer's matchup with Georgia State pits the Bears against the Atlanta-based team for the first time since the 2004-05 season. The Panthers enter the matchup with a 22-11 overall record.