



MACON, Ga. – The Mercer men's basketball team achieved a program record single-season win total with a 64-59 victory over Georgia State in Saturday's CollegeInsider.com Tournament second round game. The Bears' victory advanced the team to the CIT round of eight, awaiting the winner of Sunday's matchup between Old Dominion and USC Upstate.

If Old Dominion (21-13) defeats USC Upstate (21-12), Mercer (24-11) will travel to Norfolk, Va. to take on the Monarchs. If USC Upstate prevails, the Bears will host the Spartans for the second time this season. The date of either game is set for Wednesday and time is to be determined.

Mercer's win total surpassed the program's previous standard, set by the 2002-03 team that finished 23-6. The team improved to 15-3 at the University Center this season, becoming the first team to collect 15 home wins in a season since the 1953-54 squad went 15-0 in Macon.

Head coach Bob Hoffman booked his 72nd win in four seasons at Mercer, marking the program's third-highest win total over a four-year span. The Bears collected 75 wins over a four-year span twice (1977-81, 1978-82).

Senior Justin Cecil led the team in scoring for the second straight game, booking 19 points fueled by five-of-nine shooting from three-point range. Sophomore Langston Hall tallied 12 points, seven rebounds, five assists and three steals in 37 minutes of action.

Sophomore Jakob Gollon also reached double figures in the scoring column, netting 10 in the winning effort. He also recorded three assists, secured three rebounds and notched a block.

The game got off to a sluggish start as both teams failed to score before the first media timeout. Georgia State finally broke the ice as James Fields knocked down a free throw and hit a three to spot the visitors a 4-0 advantage with 14:54 to play.

A layup for Monty Brown sparked a 10-0 run for Mercer, punctuated by Cecil's second trey at the 10:28 juncture. From there, Mercer extended its lead to as many as 12 before going into intermission ahead 28-18.

Cecil finished the first half with 12 points on four-of-five aim from three point range. His offensive outburst helped compensate for the Bears' 10 first-half turnovers.

With 11:48 to play in the game, Mercer's lead was still 10 when Georgia State head coach Ron Hunter was whistled for two technical fouls. Hunter was dismissed from the game and Mercer sent junior Travis Smith to the line, who canned three of his four free throws to give the hosts a 40-27 lead.

Despite facing its biggest deficit of the game, Georgia State responded with a surge of energy and stormed back to tie the game at 49-49 with less than five minutes to play.

Mercer weathered the storm, scoring on five of its last seven possessions to withstand the Panthers' comeback effort. Cecil played an important role down the stretch, scoring six points and grabbing two key offensive rebounds in the final three minutes of action.

In the second half, the Bears employed a balanced offensive attack that saw seven of its 11 participants score. All told, Mercer's bench outscored Georgia State's reserves 13-2 in the final 20 minutes.

Smith's final stats showed nine points and six rebounds while Brown finished with eight points, four boards and a block.