



NORFOLK, Va.—A never-say-die attitude helped the Mercer men's basketball team erase a 12-point second-half deficit on Wednesday night and down Old Dominion 79-73 in the CollegeInsider.com quarterfinal at the Ted Constant Center. Mercer's triumph sends the team to the final-four round of the CIT at Fairfield University on Saturday at 7 p.m.

Mercer improved to 25-11 on the season while Old Dominion finished its year at 22-14. Fairfield (22-14) advanced to this weekend's semifinal with a 67-61 victory over Robert Morris (26-11) on Wednesday in Fairfield, Conn.

Senior Justin Cecil paced the team scoring for the third straight game, netting 22 points to lead a quartet of Bears in double figures. Sophomore Langston Hall scored 13 while junior Travis Smith and sophomore Daniel Coursey each added 10 points.

Sophomore Jakob Gollon narrowly missed his second double-double of the season with nine points and 12 rebounds.

After taking a 34-29 lead into halftime, ODU started the second half on a 13-6 run to go in front by 12 with 15:28 to play. With 14:01 left, the Monarch's lead was 11 when Cecil got the ball in the lane and hit a layup while being fouled.

Cecil knocked down the ensuing free throw, and on Mercer's next possession Gollon repeated the feat with his own old-fashioned three-point play. The 6-0 surge brought the Bears back within five and kept the hosts within striking distance.

Mercer chipped away at its deficit throughout the remainder of the game, closing to within one point twice before another and-one basket finally tied matters. This time, it was sophomore Monty Brown who fought through contact and converted his three-point play at the 2:50 mark.

Smith completed Mercer's comeback the next time down, canning a triple to put Mercer on top 70-68. Smith's dagger put Mercer on top for the first time in over 23 minutes of game time.

After Smith's shot, Mercer held ODU scoreless on five of its last seven possessions to seal the win.

Mercer's victory pushed the team's program-record win total to 25 and was the team's third CIT win. Before this season, Mercer had zero postseason wins in 110 years of the program.

Hall scored 10 of his 13 points in the second half as the Bears outplayed the Monarchs to the tune of a 50-39 second-half score.

Mercer tallied assists on 22 of its 27 baskets, finishing one helper short of a season-high.