



LOGAN, Utah - Utah State men's basketball opened a 16-point lead midway through the second half and held off a late Loyola Marymount rally as the Aggies tamed the Lions, 77-69, in the quarterfinals of the CollegeInsider.com Postseason Tournament Wednesday night at the Dee Glen Smith Spectrum.

With the win, USU advances to the semifinals and will host Oakland (Mich.) on Sunday, March 25 at 4 p.m. at the Dee Glen Smith Spectrum. Utah State is making its 13th postseason appearance in a row, extending its current school record. The victory was USU's third-straight postseason win, setting a new school record by topping the previous mark of two postseason wins during the 1970 season when USU advanced to the regional finals of the NCAA Tournament. Utah State is now 11-31 all-time in postseason play.

Wednesday's win was also the Aggies' 20th of the season, improving to 20-15 for their 13th-straight 20-win season, becoming one of just seven teams to win at least 20 games in each of the past 13 seasons, joining Duke, Florida, Gonzaga, Kansas, Syracuse and Texas.

Sophomore guard Preston Medlin netted a game-best 26 points, hitting three three-pointers as well as tying a season-high by hitting 13-of-14 at the free throw line, helping USU make a season-high 32 free throws in 35 attempts for a season-best 91.4 percent.

It was Medlin's third-straight double-digit outing and 29th this season. Medlin also pulled down eight rebounds, helping USU to a 43-35 rebounding advantage, as the Aggies matched their season-high rebound total. Senior guard Brockeith Pane added 17 points, scoring 12 in the second half, and also dished out four assists for the team-best and tying the game-high. Pane was also a perfect 8-of-8 at the charity stripe, his third perfect outing at the free pitch stripe, hitting 8-of-8 in all three times.

Junior forward Morgan Grim added 16 points, his second game in the last three with double-figures and 14th of the year. Grim added eight rebounds while redshirt-freshman forward Ben Clifford snared a career-best nine rebounds to go with seven points.

LMU was led by Anthony Ireland with 23 points while matching Pane with four assists. Ashley Hamilton added 11 points while Godwin Okonji pulled down a team-best seven rebounds.

The Aggies shot 20-of-51 (39.2 percent) from the floor, hitting 5-of-21 (23.8 percent) from three-point range. The Lions made 40.9 percent (27-of-66) of their field goals, making 36.4 percent (8-of-22) behind the three-point arc. LMU shot 7-of-14 (50 percent) of its charity stripe shots.

The score changed hands eight times and was tied five times, all in the first half, as the Lions had two three-point leads in the early going, the last at 9-6 after a three-pointer by LaRon Armstead at the 15:26 mark. LMU led 15-14 before USU reeled off eight unanswered points for a 22-15 lead, capped by a Medlin layup with 9:34 to go. The Lions clawed back to knot the score at 26-all with 4:07 on the clock. Grim hit a layup then Medlin netted the next five points, hitting a three from just left of the top of the arc and then added a fast break layup with 46 ticks left and the Aggies took a 33-26 lead into halftime, improving to 16-2 when leading at intermission.

Medlin opened the second stanza similar to how he closed the first, hitting a three-pointer from left of the top of the arc that got a shooter's roll around, rattling around the rim before falling through, capping USU's 10-0 run overlapping half. A trey by Ireland ended the spurt and pulled LMU within 36-29 at the 18:16 mark. From that point, USU went on an 18-9 run, capped by a Clifford three from the right corner for a 54-38 Aggie advantage with 11:31 to go, forcing a Lion timeout. LMU then scored 20 of the game's next 28 points to pull within, 62-58, with 3:05 on the clock after an Ireland layup. That would be the closest the Lions got as the Aggies didn't attempt a field goal from that point on but drained 15-of-16 (93.8 percent) free throws, including four following a pair of technicals on the LMU bench with 1:26 to go, and then two more shortly after to give USU a 73-58 lead and clinch the win.