



Yale 72, Columbia 69

Quarterfinals: Wednesday March 26, 2014

NEW YORK, N.Y. – How about a little April basketball? Javier Duren scored 26 of his career-high 33 points in the second half as Yale earned a spot in the CollegeInsider.com Tournament semifinals with a thrilling 72-69 victory over Columbia before a stunned crowd of 2,394 at Levien Gym.

The Bulldogs (18-13) will play next Tuesday (Apr.1). The site and opponent will be determined after the last quarterfinal game on Thursday night.

"This is the time of year you want to still be playing," said James Jones, The Joel E. Smilow, Class of 1954 Head Coach of Men's Basketball. "The end of the regular season left a salty taste in our mouths. We felt we let an opportunity for a championship fall through our finger tips. To come out and play in this tournament gave us another chance."

The road to the semifinals has been anything but easy for the Bulldogs, who have trailed at halftime in two of the three games. The other was tied. All three have been decided in the final minutes.

Against Columbia, Yale was down 34-25 at the break. The Bulldogs, though, scored the first 13 points of the second half to get right back in it.

"Coach [Jones] really challenged us at halftime," said Duren. "We weren't playing to the best of our ability, and I took that to heart."

Duren was outstanding in the second half, making 7-of-10 shots from the field and 10-of-12 free throws, including several clutch ones down the stretch.

Yale needed every bit of it. The score was tied at 55 with four minutes remaining. The Bulldogs scored the next four points and extended the lead to 62-57 on a Justin Sears free throw with 2:09 remaining.

Columbia, though, kept making three-pointers to stay alive. Maido Lo's deep trey cut the deficit to one with 43 seconds left. That's when Duren made perhaps his biggest play of the night. After making the first of two free throws to push the lead to two, he missed the second but managed to grab the offensive rebound.

He was quickly fouled again, and this time sank both to increase the lead to four.

The Lions got back within one on a Steve Frankoski three-pointer with five seconds remaining before Duren sank two more free throws with two seconds left. Lo's desperation three-pointer from halfcourt at the buzzer missed, setting off a celebration on the Yale bench.

The performance was a bit of redemption for Duren, who missed Yale's 62-46 loss at Columbia late in the regular season with an injury.

"Having Javier on the floor as our leader is really important," Jones said.

Duren received plenty of support. Sears finished with 17 points, Jack Montague scored nine, and Armani Cotton contributed eight points and six rebounds.

The Bulldogs were better at sharing the ball in the second half when they shot 62.5 percent from the field and scored 47 points.

"We know how good we can be when we trust each other," Duren said.

Lo paced Columbia (21-13) with 22 points. Alex Rosenberg added 19 and Cory Osetkowski scored 10.

The Lions were 15-of-28 from three-point range in the game.

Yale, though, controlled the boards, outrebounding Columbia 32-20, including 18-8 in the second half.

In reaching the semifinals, the Bulldogs have knocked off three teams that had won at least 20 games.