

# PITTSBURGH TRIBUNE-REVIEW

## Texas able to pull away from Pitt late

By John Grupp  
TRIBUNE-REVIEW

Wednesday, November 25, 2009

KANSAS CITY — On paper, Pitt appeared to be overmatched against No. 3 Texas.

On wood, it was a different matter.

The Panthers belied their inexperience and youth in the face of mighty Texas, before falling, 78-62, on Tuesday night in the finals of the CBE Classic in a game that was much closer than the final score would reveal.

"We learned we can fight," said Pitt junior center Gary McGhee, who had his first career double-double. "We can play with any team in the nation. We just need to get better."

Pitt played on even terms with a potential Final Four team, before fading against arguably coach Rick Barnes' deepest, most talented team in 12 seasons.

Pitt led 34-32 at halftime and led 43-39 with 16 minutes to play. The score was tied 51-all with 10:48 to play, but Texas outscored Pitt, 27-11, the rest of the way.

The Longhorns shot 65.4 percent from the field in the second half (17 for 26). Pitt was 11 for 30 from the field in the second half.

"When it got down to it," coach Jamie Dixon said, "their execution and their depth really wore us down."

Brad Wanamaker had 13 points and eight rebounds and McGhee, named to the all-tournament team, finished with 11 points and 10 rebounds to lead Pitt (4-1). Senior swingman Damion James scored 20 points to lead five Texas players in double figures. Junior guard Dogus Balbay added 10 points, eight rebounds and seven assists for Texas (4-0).

The Panthers fell to 35-1 in November under Dixon, but it came against the program's highest-ranked opponent this early in the season since 1994. Yet, Dixon bristled at the notion of a moral victory, even for a rebuilding team picked to finish in the lower half of the Big East that was missing two starters (Jermaine Dixon and Gilbert Brown).

"We expected to win," coach Dixon said. "We didn't expect to come in here and

lose and be encouraged. ...There is no satisfaction in a loss."

With the score tied 51-all with 10:48 to play, Jones converted a three-point play to give Texas a 54-51 lead and start a 14-3 run.

By the time Alexis Wangmene made a driving layup, Texas led 65-54 with 6:23 to play. Pitt got no closer than eight points the rest of the way. Barnes was impressed with Pitt's effort.

"If they are the ninth team in the league," Barnes said, "the Big East is a great league."

It was the second night in a row Texas pulled away in the second half. The Longhorns had outscored Iowa, 47-22, in the final 20 minutes Monday night to turn a halftime tie into an 85-60 rout.

Even in defeat, the Panthers' strong showing in the event — they routed Wichita State, 68-55, in the semifinals — bodes well.

Of the previous 16 teams to reach the CBE Classic finals, 14 have gone on to qualify for the NCAA Tournament (Only Ohio State in 2004 and Iowa in 2001 missed).

Pitt, plagued by foul trouble, closed the first half on an 11-0 run, highlighted by a pair of 3-pointers from 18-year-old true freshman Lamar Patterson, to take a 34-32 lead at the break.

Texas appeared to be in control after junior Gary Johnson's short jumper gave the Longhorns a 32-23 lead with 4:42 to play in the first half.

But McGhee hit three free throws and Patterson made two 3-pointers in a 35-second span to tie the score at 32-all. Dante Taylor's two free throws staked Pitt its first lead of the night, 34-32, with 33 seconds to go in the first half.

During the final 4:00 of the first half Texas went 0 for 5 from the field and 0 for 3 from the foul line with two turnovers.

**Notes:** Wichita State defeated Iowa, 74-57, in the consolation game. ... For the second night in a row, Pitt faced a team that was without its starting point guard, as Texas sophomore Varez Ward suffered a right knee injury during pre-game warm-ups.

*John Grupp can be reached at [jgrupp@tribweb.com](mailto:jgrupp@tribweb.com) or 412-320-7930.*

Images and text copyright © 2009 by The Tribune-Review Publishing Co.  
Reproduction or reuse prohibited without written consent from Trib Total Media