

**Photo gallery: UTEP vs. Richmond**

RICHMOND, Va. -- UTEP ran away early and soared past Richmond on Wednesday night, soaring all the way into the championship series of the College Basketball Invitational.

The Miners (22-12) took an early lead and never trailed again on their way to an 81-69 win over Richmond, adding to their late-season surge and setting the table for a championship run.

UTEP will play Oregon State in the CBI's best-of-three championship series. Oregon State beat Stanford 65-62 in overtime Wednesday. The Miners and Oregon State will open their series Monday night in Corvallis, Ore. Game 2 will be at 8 p.m. Wednesday in the Don Haskins Center. Game 3, if necessary, will be 8 p.m. Friday at the Haskins Center.

"Our guys really played hard," UTEP coach Tony Barbee said. "They came out and played with incredible energy. Our kids did a great job, especially on the defensive end of the floor. I'm so proud of my guys. This is the time of year when you want to be playing your best basketball. We've done that the last 10 games."

Senior Stefon Jackson, the only upperclassman on this young team, was sensational one more time. Jackson scored 34 points to lead all scorers. Sophomore Randy Culpepper added 19 points, sophomore Julyan Stone had 12 points, sophomore Gabe McCullley had nine points and freshman Arnett



Texas-El Paso's Stefon Jackson shoots the first of two technical foul free throws after Richmond coach Chris Mooney was ejected from the game in the second half of their CBI tournament game in Richmond, Va. on Wednesday, March 25, 2009. (AP Photo / Richmond Times-Dispatch, Dean Hoffmeyer)

Moultrie had 11 rebounds.

"My team came out focused and ready to play, ready to get to the championship of the CBI," Jackson said. "We executed everything Coach Barbee prepared for us. I'm having a good time just being around the younger guys and motivating them for next year."

The Miners trailed only once Wednesday night, that at 5-4 in the opening minutes. UTEP ran that out to a 17-9 lead, then led 42-33 at the half.

The Spiders trimmed the lead to two, 58-56, with 8 minutes to play, but the Miners ran it right back to a dozen at 68-56 and this one was theirs, their third consecutive win in the CBI.

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**Make plans**

- What: UTEP vs. Oregon State for the CBI championship.
- When: Game 1 is Monday at Oregon State; Game 2 is Wednesday at UTEP; Game 3 (if necessary) Friday at UTEP.
- Tickets: \$10 and \$20; go on sale 8 a.m. Thursday at UTEP ticket center.

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