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## VCU hangs on to foil George Washington in CBI

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WASHINGTON -- As they sat during a timeout with 11:37 remaining in the second half, several of the Virginia Commonwealth Rams looked at coach Shaka Smart as he talked.

Then they looked at the big overhead scoreboard at George Washington's Smith Center, looked back at Smart, and then back at the scoreboard.

Another big lead had almost vanished -- 17 points in the first half, 12 at halftime, four at the moment - - and you could see the concern and anguish.

VCU has let large leads slip away in several games this season. But as he sat there during the timeout, Rams guard Ed Nixon said the past was not on his mind.

And maybe that's as good a reason as any that VCU made just enough plays this time to stop George Washington's charge and secure a 79-73 victory in the first round of the College Basketball Invitational.

The Rams (23-9) will host a quarterfinal game at the Siegel Center on Monday against the winner of tonight's Eastern Kentucky-Charleston game.

Nixon said he was "looking at how much time we had to get back to what we were doing. Everything that happened in the past was a trial to get us fighting back once teams make their runs."

The Rams sank 10 (of 18) 3-pointers in the first half, delighting the VCU fans who might have outnumbered the GW fans in the crowd of 793 while building a 45-33 lead. But the Colonials (16-15) began to get easier shots against the Rams' defense after intermission and VCU went cold behind the arc (1 of 9).

Nine minutes in, the Rams were in the midst of a 5:46 scoreless streak and led 51-49.

Two things helped restore VCU: some key plays from Nixon, Bradford Burgess, Joey Rodriguez and freshman Troy Daniels, and a zone that had been effective in the first half.

Nixon's free throw and Burgess' 3-pointer provided a six-point cushion. The zone slowed GW's momentum.

"Any time you only have one day to prepare for a team, it's really hard to go over a lot of stuff that they do," Smart said. "Most teams have more plays against man-to-man than they do against zone. So we decided coming into the game we were going to use some zone even though we've been a 95 percent man team."

The Rams pushed the lead to 69-58 with 3:22 remaining, but GW came back again. The Colonials, who got 30 points from Damian Hollis, crept to 70-66 with 1:16 left, to three back with 47 seconds left and trailed by two with 14 seconds left.

Two free throws by Daniels at 0.13.5 restored a four-point lead, and two more by Nixon made sure the Rams would play again.

VCU made 9 of 10 free throws in the final minute.

"Instead of getting down on ourselves and feeling sorry for ourselves, we kept fighting," Nixon said.

Rodriguez had 16 points, Nixon and Jamie Skeen each had 14 points, and Larry Sanders and Burgess each had 11 for the Rams. Daniels, playing a season-high 17 minutes, added eight points.

"Coach said to us in one of the timeouts that it was a great opportunity for us to get back some of the things we had let slip during the season, like letting second-half leads diminish and losing games," Burgess said. "We stuck to what we were doing, we stuck together, and we got the win."

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NOTE: Tickets for the quarterfinal game will go on sale today at the Siegel Center box office. For information, call (804) 828-7267.

### VCU (23-9)

	<b>M</b>	<b>FG</b>	<b>FT</b>	<b>R</b>	<b>PF</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>Pt</b>
Sanders-----	24	3-6	5-9	8	4	0	11
Skeen-----	27	5-9	2-2	8	1	1	4
Rodriguez-----	35	5-13	3-4	5	4	6	16
Burgess-----	32	5-7	0-0	5	3	2	11
Nixon-----	27	3-7	6-7	1	2	4	14
Saintil-----	6	0-0	0-0	0	1	0	0
Theus-----	11	0-2	0-0	1	1	2	0
Pishchalnikov-----	3	0-1	0-0	1	0	0	0
Daniels-----	17	2-4	2-2	1	0	1	8

Rozzell-----	15	2-3	0-0	1	1	0	5
Gwynn-----	3	0-2	0-0	0	0	0	0
Team				2			
<b>Totals</b> -----	<b>25-54</b>	<b>18-24</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>79</b>	

**GEORGE WASHINGTON (16-14)**

	<b>M</b>	<b>FG</b>	<b>FT</b>	<b>R</b>	<b>PF</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>Pt</b>
Ware-----	13	1-1	2-2	2	0	1	4
Hollis-----	25	12-20	3-3	8	3	0	30
Katuka-----	26	2-4	2-4	4	4	1	6
Taylor-----	33	3-10	2-3	2	0	8	8
Kromah-----	29	7-15	3-4	5	2	3	18
Smith-----	13	1-6	1-2	3	0	0	3
King-----	13	0-1	0-0	4	1	0	0
Bynes-----	8	0-4	0-0	1	0	0	0
Pellom-----	15	0-1	0-0	2	1	0	0
Johnson-----	11	1-1	0-0	0	2	1	2
Opoku-----	14	1-1	0-0	4	5	0	2
Team				4			
<b>Totals</b> -----	<b>28-64</b>	<b>13-18</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>73</b>	

**VCU** ----- **45 34 -- 79**

**GWU** ----- **33 40 -- 73**

3-point goals -- VCU (11-27): Rodriguez 3-8, Skeen 2-4, Nixon 2-4, Daniels 2-4, Rozzell 1-2, Burgess 1-3, Theus 0-2. GWU (4-15): Hollis 3-7, Kromah 1-3, Smith 0-1, King 0-1, Taylor 0-1, Bynes 0-2.

Turnovers -- VCU (17): Rodriguez 8, Burgess 2, Skeen 2, Nixon, Pishchalnikov, Theus, Sanders, Team. GWU (2): Kromah 3, Hollis 3, King 2, Taylor 2, Ware, Katuka, Smith.

Blocked shots -- VCU (6): Sanders 2, Daniels, Burgess, Skeen, Saintil. GWU (2): Hassell, Finney, Carter.

Steals -- VCU (9): Skeen 2, Sanders 2, Theus, Burgess, Rodriguez, Nixon, Rozzell. GWU (9): Kromah 3, Hollis, Katuka, Bynes, Johnson, King, Ware.

A -- 793.

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