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Sports

Princeton men win CBI opener

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For The Trentonian

PRINCETON — There were a lot of things different about last night's Princeton men's basketball game.

The national anthem was sung earlier than normal, while the Tigers were warming up, with **Princeton** coach Sydney Johnson still in the locker room, and the entire Duquesne team not yet on the floor. The game was on national television. Johnson had to wait before going into the locker room at halftime in order to do a halftime television interview.

It was the postseason, something different for the Tigers; something they hadn't experienced since 2004 and something Johnson hadn't experienced as a head coach.

But some things stayed the same. The Tigers played exceptional defense, controlled the ball, slowed the game down once they got the lead, and most importantly they won the game, 65-51, over Duquesne in the first round of the College Basketball Invitational.

"I try to prepare them for the postseason," said Johnson. "Timeouts are longer. Maybe it's a little more of a physical game. That's what the postseason is about. There might be a few things that are quirky. But at the end of the day these guys are players. We're not gonna complain if the anthem is at the seven-minute mark or the buzzer. We're just gonna continue playing in the CBI and try to enjoy it."

Princeton will play at IUPUI, which won at Hofstra last night, in the quarterfinals of the CBI on Monday.

The Tigers struggled in the opening minutes and didn't even make a field goal until more than six minutes into the game when Doug Davis hit a jumper to cut the Duquesne lead to six, 10-4.

"We were very careless and maybe there was a part of us that wasn't quite ready to play," Johnson said about the slow start. "We re-focused at some point and the guys turned their energy up."

The Dukes led by as much as nine in the first half, 20-11, with 7:44 left. But Davis, who came off the bench, helped get the Tigers back in the game by hitting a 3-pointer to tie the game at 23 with 3:23 remaining and then another triple with 49 seconds left in the half to give Princeton its first lead of the game, one it would never squander, 26-23.

"I think it was primarily our energy," Maddox said about the first half. "We came in at halftime and talked to each other like we normally do. And we thought the main thing that was wrong with the first half was that our energy was so low."

Duquesne went on a 4-0 lead to start the second half to cut the lead to one, 28-27, but Princeton responded with a 13-3 run to get the game under control.

Davis led the Tigers with 16 points, including 4-for-7 from 3-point range. Maddox, who also came off the bench, finished with 15 points, including what were perhaps the most important plays of the game. When Duquesne cut the lead to one early in the second half, Maddox made a nice pass to Zach Finley for a dunk, then made a hook shot, then made a nifty up-and-under layup, and a few plays later made a pair of free throws to extend the Princeton lead to 11.

Princeton outrebounded Duquesne, 41-26. The Tigers committed 15 turnovers, but 10 of those were in the first half. They held the Dukes to 37 percent shooting from the field and 3-for-16 from 3-point range. Princeton's bench outscored Duquesne's, 45-14.

With the win, Princeton is now 21-8 for the season. It is the most wins for the Tigers since the 1998-99 season, when they were 22-8. It's the first postseason victory for Princeton since defeating North Carolina State at home in the second round of the NIT in 1999.

"It means a lot," Johnson said about the success of his team this season. "I'll be honest with you. For me personally, I won games here as a player. They were some of the best days of my life. I just want the same experiences for these guys. It takes a lot of work. But we have worked hard and we're in the moment and we certainly want to enjoy it as long as it will last."

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