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Holland's 26 points lead BU to CBI win over Oregon State

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John Holland returned to form just in time to help the Boston University men's basketball team earn a win 51 years in the making.

The junior forward scored a game-high 26 points Wednesday night, propelling BU to its first postseason victory since 1959 with a 96-78 rout of Oregon State University in opening-round action of the College Basketball Invitational at Gill Coliseum in Corvallis, Ore.

Senior guards Carlos Strong and Tyler Morris tallied 22 and 18 points, respectively, for the BU (20-13), which will play the program's first-ever postseason home game Monday night at Case Gymnasium in a quarterfinal matchup against Morehead State University.

Four days after falling at the University of Vermont in the America East championship game, BU shot 56.7 percent from the field and 37.5 percent beyond the 3-point arc while setting season highs in points (96) and assists (22).

"We were heartbroken for two days, and it hurt," said BU coach Patrick Chambers, whose squad has won nine of 11 contests dating back to Feb. 1. "When we got the [CBI invitation] Sunday night, it re-energized us because we don't want break up as a team yet. These guys like each other and want to be around each other. They want to win for one another.

"To come out here, across the country, and be able to play like this, I give a lot of credit to these players. They came out with fire and intensity, and a willingness to have pride in Boston University basketball."

Freshman guard Jared Cunningham had 21 points for defending CBI champion Oregon State (14-18), which committed 18 turnovers that produced 21 BU points.

The America East runner-ups had little trouble shredding the 1-3-1 zone of the Beavers, who entered Wednesday boasting the nation's 28th-ranked scoring defense at 61.1 points per game.

"I watched a ton of tape on their 1-3-1 and it was scary," Chambers said. "We wanted to take quick shots against it and rebound the basketball. Fortunately, we made some early shots tonight."

Following a conference tournament in which he averaged 10.3 points per game, Holland racked up 14 points during Wednesday's first half as the Terriers vaulted into the break with a 46-27 advantage.

Asked before the game what type of effort he anticipated from Holland, the America East's regular-season scoring champion at 19.9 points per contest, Chambers offered a prediction that proved prophetic.

"I expect John to come out and play with great energy and confidence," Chambers said. "I expect him to play like the John Holland we're used to."

He didn't disappoint. Neither did his teammates.

Oregon State scored the game's first five points, but BU answered with a 12-4 run and never trailed again.

The Terriers put the Beavers away late in the first session, ripping off a 23-4 surge highlighted by a Holland dunk and three treys from Morris.

BU stretched its lead to as many as 28 points during the second half, and Oregon State pulled no closer than 16.

Less than a week removed from having their NCAA Tournament dreams dashed, the Terriers are relishing the opportunity to extend their season.

"When we got asked to play in this tournament, everybody came together and wanted to win the CBI," Holland said. "I know it's not the NCAAs, but everybody just wanted to play one more time, for one another. I think we showed that tonight."

"Every time we step on the floor, we're going to play hard."

Game notes: BU attained its 12th 20-win season, the first since 2004-05, and improved to 3-11 in postseason play. ... Senior guard Corey Lowe matched a career best with nine dimes to surpass 1983 graduate Brett Brown (404) for fifth place on BU's all-time assists list. ... Strong eclipsed the 1,000-point plateau, becoming the 30th player in program history to reach that milestone. ... Holland's 634 points this season mark the second-highest total by a Terrier.

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