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Tuesday, March 23, 2010 |

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Rozzell-led Rams advance in CBI

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Virginia Commonwealth University's Brandon Rozzell (32) puts a shot up during the first half of CBI quarterfinals against College of Charleston.

MARK GORMUS/TIMES-DISPATCH



• Virginia Commonwealth University's Brandon Rozzell (32) puts a shot up during the first half of CBI quarterfinals against College of Charleston. MARK GORMUS/TIMES-DISPATCH



- College of Charleston's Jeremy Simmons (21) and Virginia Commonwealth University's Larry Sanders (1) go for the ball. In the center is VCU's Jamie Skeen (21) during the first half of CBI quarterfinals at VCU's Siegel Center. MARK GORMUS/TIMES-DISPATCH



- Virginia Commonwealth University's Joey Rodriguez (12) gets airborne as he puts a shot up during the second half of CBI quarterfinals against College of Charleston at VCU's Siegel Center MARK GORMUS/TIMES-DISPATCH



- Virginia Commonwealth University's Larry Sanders (1) puts a shot up during the first half of CBI quarterfinals against College of Charleston. MARK GORMUS/TIMES-DISPATCH



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VCU's Brandon Rozzell scored 20 points in the Rams' CBI victory over the College of Charleston.

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By [Tim Pearrell](#)

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Brandon Rozzell's role as the igniter has been well-established for the Virginia Commonwealth University basketball team.

Jamie Skeen's role still is evolving, but it's becoming evident the big forward will be a major cog for the Rams next season.

Rozzell did his thing -- sparking a big first-half run -- and Skeen combined with Joey Rodriguez to keep VCU humming along in a 93-86 victory over the College of Charleston in the quarterfinals of the College Basketball Invitational last night before 3,297 at the Siegel Center.

The Rams (24-9), after being reseeded by tournament organizers, will play Boston University tomorrow in one semifinal at the Siegel Center at 7 p.m..

Rozzell, Skeen and Rodriguez combined for 57 points. They were 24 of 33 from the field as the Rams shot 54.3 percent in the second half and 50.7 percent for the game.

Rozzell, who finished with a career-high 20 points, can get the Siegel Center crowd excited in a hurry when he gets on one of his hot streaks from the perimeter.

The junior guard from Highland Springs had the joint jumping in the first half with a trio of 3-pointers and 11 points in a spree that lasted a little more than two minutes.

That was part of a 17-0 run that took the Rams from a six-point deficit to an 11-point lead.

"Man, I wish I could take those fans on the road just for one guy, Brandon Rozzell, because it's like a light switch when he's playing in front of our fans," VCU coach Shaka Smart said. "He's phenomenal."

Rozzell was 7 of 11 -- 4 of 7 behind the arc -- and said he doesn't know how to explain his streaks, other than he feeds off the crowd and starts "locking in, focusing, knocking down some shots."

"Getting out and running is where I can express my game the best," he said. "That spurt, we were up and down the floor. I had some open shots, so I just took them."

Skeen transferred from Wake Forest. The 6-9 junior has been solid in his first season -- averaging 7.5 points and 4.5 rebounds -- but he's picked up his scoring in the CBI. He had 18 points last night after getting 14 points and eight rebounds in a first-round win over George Washington.

"I'm just trying to pick up my role," said Skeen was 9 of 11 from the floor and had six rebounds. "Next year, I feel like I'm going to be more in the offense. I just want to help out the team as much as possible, so I just decided to start shooting the ball a little more."

Charleston (22-12) pulled to 50-49 with 15 minutes left in the second half, but the Rams zoomed away again behind a spurt fueled by Larry Sanders, Rodriguez, Bradford Burgess, Rozzell and Skeen.

Rozzell, along with freshman Darius Theus and senior Kirill Pishchalnikov, started in place of Ed Nixon, Rodriguez and Sanders. Rodriguez said he and Sanders were late returning to Richmond after being given a few days off, and said Nixon missed a practice after a death in the family.

Rodriguez was 8 of 11 from the floor and had 19 points. Sanders was 5 of 16 from the floor but scored 14 points and had 17 rebounds and four blocked shots. He became the 29th Ram to score 1,000 career points on a move across the lane in the second half.

"VCU played with a lot of enthusiasm tonight. A lot," Charleston coach Bobby Cremins said. "These guys are going to have a shot to win this tournament. There's no doubt in my mind."

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Staff writer xxxx contributed to this report.

COLLEGE OF CHARLESTON (22-12)

	M	FG	FT	R	PF	A	Pt
Monroe-----	29	3-13	0-0	4	3	1	6
Goudelock-----	31	6-18	4-4	7	3	7	19
Simmons-----	35	8-13	0-0	9	4	1	16
White Jr.-----	37	9-12	2-2	6	1	5	24
Hall-----	22	1-4	0-0	6	2	1	2
Sundberg-----	22	4-7	1-2	6	3	1	13
Lawrence-----	24	2-9	0-0	0	1	4	6
Team				3			
Totals -----	33	76	7-8	41	17	20	86

VCU (24-9)

	M	FG	FT	R	PF	A	Pt
Theus-----	14	1-2	0-1	1	1	4	2

Pishchalnikov-----	6	1-4	0-2	3	0	0	2
Burgess-----	30	4-10	0-0	6	1	2	8
Skeen-----	22	9-11	0-1	6	3	0	18
Rozzell-----	24	7-11	2-2	5	2	0	20
Sanders-----	26	5-16	4-4	17	1	0	14
Grayson-----	1	0-0	2-2	0	1	0	2
Saintil-----	3	0-1	0-0	1	0	1	0
Rodriguez-----	31	8-11	1-1	3	1	9	19
Daniels-----	14	2-4	1-2	1	1	1	6
Hinton-----	1	0-0	0-0	0	0	0	0
Gwynn-----	4	0-2	0-0	0	0	0	0
Nixon-----	24	1-3	0-0	1	1	2	2
Team							
Totals -----	38-75	10-15	44	11	20	93	

COC ----- 34 52 -- 86

VCU ----- 42 51 -- 93

3-point goals -- COC (13-33): Sundberg 4-5, White Jr. 4-7, Goudelock 3-8, Lawrence 2-9, Monroe 0-4. VCU (7-15): Rozzell 4-7, Rodriguez 2-2, Daniels 1-3, Nixon 0-1, Burgess 0-2.

Turnovers -- COC (13): White Jr. 3, Hall 2, Sundberg 2, Monroe 2, Goudelock 2, Lawrence. VCU (13): Rodriguez 5, Burgess 3, Sanders 3, Pishchalnikov, Nixon.

Blocked shots -- COC (2): Simmons 2. VCU (6): Sanders 4, Burgess, Skeen.

Steals -- COC (9): Sundberg 2, Monroe 2, Hall 2, Lawrence 2, White Jr. VCU (10): Rozzell 2, Burgess 2, Rodriguez 2, Sanders 2, Theus, Skeen.

A -- 3,297.

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