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Billikens advance to semifinals with two-OT win over Green Bay

By Jim Rodenbush

Monday, March 22, 2010



Box score

Saint Louis used a familiar formula to extend its season Monday night.

Willie Reed's dunk with 1:55 left in the second overtime put the Billikens ahead for good as Saint Louis rallied from 11 points down in the second half to beat Green Bay, 68-62, in the quarterfinals of the College Basketball Invitational before 4,235 fans at Chaifetz Arena.

Saint Louis (22-11) will host Princeton (22-8) in a CBI semifinal matchup at 8 p.m.

Wednesday. Princeton advanced with a 74-68 victory Monday night over IUPUI, ironically also in double overtime.

In the other quarterfinal games Monday night: Virginia Commonwealth beat Charleston, 93-86, and Boston defeated Morehead State, 91-89 in overtime.

"It was a great game," Saint Louis coach Rick Majerus said. "If you're a fan, and you like ball, you enjoyed this tonight. It was two great competitors. It wasn't an artistic performance. It's what makes it fun to go to a game."

Reed, who finished with 21 points and 10 rebounds, put Saint Louis ahead 62-60 with his basket. Green Bay cut it to one point before Christian Salecich hit a 3-pointer to give the Billikens a four-point cushion with 21 seconds left.

"He couldn't have been more open," said Majerus about Salecich's shot. "He doesn't have any lack of confidence in wanting to take the shot."

Salecich made one of two free throws for a 66-62 lead and finished off the scoring with a lay-up as the game ended.

Cody Ellis and Kwamain Mitchell each added 14 points for Saint Louis, which trailed 38-27 with 14:44 left in the second half. The Billikens' comeback Monday night was reminiscent of a stretch in early February, when they rallied from double-digit deficits to win four consecutive games.

"I applaud my team for hanging in," Majerus said. "Tonight, they never gave up. They never quit."

A dunk from Reed and a lay-up from Mitchell put Saint Louis up 27-23 with 2:19 left in the first half. That's when the Billikens' troubles started. Saint Louis went the next 8 minutes, 42 seconds without a point, and Green Bay (22-13) responded with a 15-0 run for an 11-point lead.

Troy Cotton, who scored 17 points to lead the Phoenix, had 11 consecutive points during Green Bay's spurt, including three 3-pointers. Ellis' jump shot with 13:37 left in the second half broke Saint Louis' drought and cut Green Bay's lead to 38-29.

The Billikens slowly climbed back into the game over the remainder of the second half. Mitchell's 3-pointer made it 47-44 with 4:33 remaining. Reed's 3-point play two minutes later

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cut Green Bay's lead to one. Brian Conklin tied the game at 51-51 after hitting one of two free throws with just under two minutes left.

After Green Bay went back in front by two, the Billikens forced overtime when a steal by Mitchell and a lay-up by Reed made it 53-53 with 25 seconds left.

The teams were tied 56-56 after the first overtime.

"It was a hard-fought game," Majerus said. "That was a good team. They've got a good record. Both teams were so tired at the end. They were punch-drunk players trying to hang in. There guys and our guys both played well. It was a heck of a college game."

Green Bay led 9-4 behind seven points from Rahmon Fletcher. Saint Louis responded by scoring 10 consecutive points. Back-to-back baskets from Kyle Cassity tied the game at 9-9. Mitchell followed with a 3-pointer and another basket from Mitchell put the Billikens ahead, 14-9, with 13:42 left in the first half.

The Billikens maintained that lead for most of the half. A three-point play from Reed made it 23-18, but Green Bay tied the game thanks to two free throws from Bryquis Perine and a 3-pointer from Fletcher.

Notes: Saint Louis freshman guard Justin Jordan will miss the remainder of the tournament after suffering a broken right thumb late in the second half. ... The Billikens improved to 3-0 in double overtime games this season. They also won 79-75 on Jan. 13 at Duquesne and 68-65 on Feb. 13 against Dayton. ... In all, Saint Louis improved to 3-2 in overtime games. ... Reed had two blocks Monday night and set a Saint Louis single-season record with 69. ... Majerus is 4-0 in his career against Green Bay. ... The Billikens won the only previous meeting between the teams, 58-54 in the second round of the National Invitation Tournament in 1990. ... Green Bay assistant coach Angres Thorpe served as an assistant on Majerus' first Saint Louis team in 2007-08.

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