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Thursday, March 25, 2010 |

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Home > Sports> College> College Basketball

## Revved-up Rams reach CBI title series



DEAN HOFFMEYER/TIMES-DISPATCH

Virginia Commonwealth's Joey Rogriguez heads up the floor after stealing the ball from Boston University's Tyler Morris.

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[VCU 88, Boston University 75](#)

By [Tim Pearrell](#)

Published: March 25, 2010

Updated: March 25, 2010

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Bradford Burgess said it took him a day or two to get over the fact that Virginia Commonwealth University basketball team was left out of the NIT. Joey Rodriguez said it took him a game.

The sting of snub isn't gone for the Rams -- and it certainly isn't forgotten. And while it may have taken them a little time to buy into playing in the College Basketball Invitational, now they intend to win it.

VCU moved into the unique best-of-three CBI championship series by pulling away from Boston University in the second half last night. A better defensive effort and a 46-point spree secured an 88-75 victory in the semifinals before 3,352 at the Siegel Center.

VCU (25-9) will take on Saint Louis (23-11), which defeated Princeton 69-59 in the other semifinal, in the title series. The first game will be Monday at 7 p.m. at the Siegel Center. The second game will be Wednesday at Saint Louis at 8 p.m. (EDT). The third game, if needed, will be Friday, April 2 at Saint Louis at 8 (EDT).

With an RPI of 66 and a solid nonconference résumé, the Rams were stunned when they weren't selected for the NIT. Rodriguez said that even during VCU's first-round CBI win against George Washington, he still was "thinking about it a little bit. After that game, I was in it all the way and felt a lot better about it."

The Rams seem to be enjoying themselves. Maybe it's not having the pressure of trying to make the postseason, but they're relaxed -- maybe too relaxed on defense for coach Shaka Smart's liking -- pressing on the accelerator and racking up big numbers on offense.

In three CBI games, VCU has scored 79, 93 and 88 points.

"I'm out here playing with these guys, enjoying myself and we're having fun," forward Larry Sanders said. "I'm happy."

Sanders had 18 points, eight rebounds and three blocked shots. Burgess had 20 points, Rodriguez 19 and Ed Nixon 10.

Rodriguez had five assists, giving him 200 this season. Only four other Colonial Athletic Association players -- VCU's Eric Maynor, Richmond's Greg Beckwith, George Mason's Curtis McCants and Navy's Doug Wojcik -- have had 200 or more assists in a season. Maynor, McCants and Wojcik each did it twice.

"If we can carry this into next year," Rodriguez said, "I think it's going to help us a lot, playing loose and carefree like this."

Smart believed the Rams were way too loose defensively in the first half. Boston hit seven 3-pointers and took a 43-42 lead into halftime.

"I didn't raise my voice at all," he said. " I said, 'Guys, do we have more pride than that? Are we more competitive than that? Are we better defensively than that?' The way they played in the second half answered those questions."

The Terriers didn't score in the first five minutes. VCU used a 9-0 run to get a working margin, extended it to 21-8, and never let Boston get within eight the rest of the way.

The Terriers were 1 for 6 behind the arc in the second half.

"Everybody was focused on winning and getting to this championship," Burgess said. "We've got one more team to play, and hopefully we can get it done in two."

Contact Tim Pearrell at (804) 649-6965 or [tpearrell@timesdispatch.com](mailto:tpearrell@timesdispatch.com) .

**BOSTON UNIVERSITY (21-14)**

	<b>M</b>	<b>FG</b>	<b>FT</b>	<b>R</b>	<b>PF</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>Pt</b>
O'Brien-----	32	8-15	2-2	8	3	0	20
Strong-----	37	5-8	3-4	2	3	3	14
Holland-----	38	7-16	1-1	5	3	3	16
Morris-----	39	4-12	5-16	5	1	5	16
Pelage-----	24	2-5	0-2	13	1	0	4
Schulze-----	1	0-0	0-1	0	0	0	0
Sirutis-----	19	0-2	2-2	2	5	0	2
Agboola-----	1	0-0	0-0	0	0	0	0
Sullivan-----	8	1-2	0-0	2	2	0	3
Smith-----	1	0-0	0-0	0	0	0	0
Team				1			
<b>Totals</b> -----	<b>27</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>13-18</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>75</b>

**VCU (25-9)**

	<b>M</b>	<b>FG</b>	<b>FT</b>	<b>R</b>	<b>PF</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>Pt</b>
Sanders-----	31	6-9	6-10	8	3	1	18
Rodriguez-----	33	8-15	0-0	4	2	5	19
Burgess-----	29	6-12	5-5	4	2	1	20
Skeen-----	24	4-7	0-0	4	0	2	8
Nixon-----	26	4-8	0-0	7	2	2	10
Grayson-----	1	0-0	0-0	0	1	0	0
Theus-----	13	0-1	1-2	0	2	2	1
Pishchalnikov-----	5	0-0	1-2	2	1	0	1

Rozzell-----	22	2-8	0-1	2	1	3	5
Daniels-----	9	2-4	0-0	0	0	0	6
Hinton-----	1	0-0	0-0	0	0	0	0
Gwynn-----	6	0-2	0-0	0	0	0	0
Team				4			
<b>Totals -----</b>	<b>32-66</b>	<b>13-20</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>88</b>	

**BOSTON U. ----- 43 32 -- 75**

**VCU ----- 42 46 -- 88**

3-point goals -- Boston University (8-20): Morris 3-5, O'Brien 2-6, Sullivan 1-1, Strong 1-3, Holland 1-4, Sirutis 0-1. VCU (11-31): Burgess 3-7, Rodriguez 3-8, Nixon 2-3, Daniels 2-4, Rozzell 1-7, Skeen 0-2.

Turnovers -- Boston University (17): Morris 6, Holland 4, O'Brien 2, Pelage 2, Strong, Schulze, Sullivan. VCU (9): Nixon 3, Rodriguez 2, Rozzell 2, Burgess, Skeen.

Blocked shots -- Boston University (4): Holland 2, Pelage, O'Brien. VCU (5): Sanders 3, Skeen, Rozzell.

Steals -- Boston University (6): Strong 3, O'Brien 2, Pelage. VCU (12): Nixon 4, Theus 3, Sanders 2, Rozzell, Gwynn, Rodriguez.

A -- 3,352.

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