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Jays go on defensive to extend their year

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MARK DAVIS/THE WORLD-HERALD

Creighton's Darryl Ashford fouls San Jose State's Keith Shamburger as they go for a rebound in the second half.

- **Box Score:** [Creighton 85, San Jose State 74](#)
- **Photo Showcase:** [Creighton vs. San Jose State, March 15](#)
- **Video Below:** [See highlights from Creighton's CBI opener against San Jose State.](#)

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Creighton put up a lot of points Tuesday night in knocking San Jose State out of the College Basketball Invitational game.

But in the end, it was the energy that the Bluejays brought to rebounding and defending in the second half that ultimately turned a close game into an 85-74 victory before 3,086 fans at Qwest Center Omaha.

"It was pretty obvious that we weren't blocking them out and ending defending possessions in the first half," Creighton guard Jahenns Manigat said. "It's something the coaching staff addressed at halftime, and we made a conscious effort to make sure that didn't happen in the second half."

The win improved the Bluejays to 20-14 and advanced them to a second-round game against Davidson on Monday. The game will be played at the Qwest Center.

In falling behind 43-40 at halftime, Creighton allowed the Spartans of the Western Athletic Conference to shoot 51.5 percent from the field in the first 20 minutes and make 7 of 10 shots from 3-point range. San Jose State also held an 18-13 rebounding edge, which Bluejays coach Greg McDermott delicately pointed out in his halftime discussion.

Asked what he told his team, McDermott replied, "I can't repeat everything I said at halftime. It was awful. We miscommunicated some switches. We got lost in transition. And we didn't work as hard in transition as we should have, and they got some easy baskets because of that.

"It was one of poorer defensive halves we had all year, but San Jose State deserves credit for some of that. They have a lot of guys that can score the basketball from the perimeter, and they hit some tough shots."

The Spartans shot 46.2 percent in the second half but found many of their shots more contested than they were in the first 20 minutes. Creighton also held a 23-10 second-half rebounding advantage, including a 10-3 edge on the offensive boards. That led to an 11-3 advantage in second-chance points.

"We came out stagnant and really didn't play with the energy we needed to," Creighton center Kenny Lawson said. "We picked it up in the second half. It was simply a matter of us not playing as hard as we needed to in the first half and then playing with more energy after the half."

Creighton also hit some big shots in the second half when it converted 53.1 percent of its field-goal attempts. None was bigger than the three that Manigat knocked down in succession that finally allowed the Bluejays to get some separation.

Justin Graham's layup had pulled San Jose within 65-62 with 9:28 to play, but Manigat buried shots from beyond the arc on back-to-back possessions

to stretch Creighton's lead to 71-62 with 8:04 remaining. After a turnover, Manigat made another jumper from just inside the arc to give the Bluejays their first double-digit lead.

San Jose never got closer than 10 points after that.

Manigat made 6 of 7 shots from the field, including 5 of 6 from 3-point range. Afterward, he was asked why he missed a shot.

"Unbelievable," McDermott said jokingly.

Said Manigat: "The basket just felt really wide today. I guess that comes from spending extra time in the gym and getting extra shots up. It's something that Coach Mac has been preaching all year, finding time on your own to be able to stay in a groove."

Manigat scored 17 points, while Doug McDermott led Creighton with 26 points and nine rebounds. The Bluejays also got 18 points from 6-foot-9 center Gregory Echenique, who had scored just 10 in his previous three games.

Echenique had 14 points in the second half, while Lawson had half of his 10 points in the final 20 minutes.

"We're a little light in the backside in the post," San Jose coach George Nessman said. "Echenique and Lawson present real matchup problems for us. Double-zero (Echenique) is really a load in there, and when he gets the ball, he can just bully you to the rim.

"He was able to do that, and he got to the free-throw line a lot. He had a really good game and he was a big reason they were able to separate themselves from us. McDermott had a great game, too."

San Jose, which ended its season 17-16, got 23 points from Keith Shamburger and 15 from Wil Clark. Guard Adrian Oliver, the country's No. 3 scorer, finished with 14, 10 below his season's average.

The 17 wins were the Spartans' most since 1981, and the CBI appearance was their first taste of postseason play since 1996.

"From an outsider's view, you don't understand the progress we've made as a program the past couple of years," Nessman said. "For us to advance to the postseason is big for our program, and I'm proud of our players."

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• **Video:** See highlights from Creighton's CBI opener against San Jose State:



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