



## URI Rams

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# UCF 66, URI 54: Rams' season ends as team loses battle on boards

01:00 AM EDT on Tuesday, March 22, 2011

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Special to the Journal

ORLANDO — It became all but forgotten as the game progressed, but the first possession of Monday's CBI tournament quarterfinal between Rhode Island and the University of Central Florida proved to be a precursor of how the game would go for the Rams.

The first two shots by the Knights clanked off the rim, but somehow, UCF got the rebound each time. Isaac Sosa followed the second miss by sinking a 3-pointer from the right baseline. The battle of the boards didn't get much better and the Rams' season ended with a 66-54 loss in front of an announced crowd of 3,919 at UCF Arena.

Keith Clanton scored 16 points and AJ Tyler 11 as the Knights (21-11) advanced to the CBI final four against an opponent to be named.

Rhode Island's season ended with a 20-14 record.

[Delroy James](#) led all scorers with 18, but the Rams' struggles on the boards and a flat-shooting effort in the second half sent Rhode Island's winningest senior class home.

A strong James start and poor UCF shooting gave Rhode Island a chance to take a big early lead. UCF shot just 31 percent from the field, but 14 offensive rebounds that produced 13 second-chance points kept the Knights within three at halftime.

"We should have been up 15 at half," Rhode Island coach Jim Baron said. "Offensive rebounds kept them in the game."

Rebounding has been one of the Rams' weaknesses all season.

"Our goal every game has been to rebound," Baron said. "It's all about effort. I told my team at halftime that the team that rebounds has a chance."

UCF, which ranked in the top 25 back in December, found its shooting touch in the second half as the Knights shot 68 percent from the field — mostly inside.

While UCF flourished, URI missed 9 of its first 11 shots and quickly found itself down, 45-35, with 10:56 remaining.

Two [Akeem Richmond](#) free throws got the Rams within 47-41 with 9:16 left, but UCF opened up a 59-45 lead on a Isiah Sykes dunk with 5:04 left. Rhode Island never got within nine points after that.

It looked like James would have another historic night one game after he posted the program's first triple-double against Miami (of Ohio) on Wednesday.

The senior sank his first two 3-pointers and scored the Rams' first nine points. Then he drew his second foul and forced Baron to rotate the roster.

[Ben Eaves](#) and [Orion Outerbridge](#) had their moments in the first half, combining for 13 points as the Rams took a 28-21 lead with 5:59 left.

James' foul trouble spread to [Nikola Malesevic](#) and [Will Martell](#) as the game progressed.

"We had to pull him in and then pull him out," Baron said of playing James with foul trouble.

James, who was 7-for-12 from the field, also led the Rams with eight boards. Eaves finished with eight, Outerbridge seven and Jamil Wilson and Richmond six apiece.

Tom Herzog had 10 points for UCF, which finished with a 44-28 rebounding advantage.