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## Jays roll, set to take on Altman's Ducks for title

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Creighton's Doug McDermott, left, and Antoine Young guard against Central Florida's Keith Clanton in the first half of the semifinal game of the College Basketball Invitational at Qwest Center Omaha on Wednesday, March 23, 2011.

- **Photo Showcase:** [Creighton men's basketball, March 23](#)
- **Box Score:** [Creighton 82, Central Florida 64](#)
- **Video Below:** [See postgame press conference and highlights video from the Creighton-Central Florida game](#)

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Creighton made its intentions known right from the start of Wednesday's College Basketball Invitational semifinal game against Central Florida.

The Bluejays hit their first five shots and six of their first seven in blowing out to a 13-point lead, then never let up in posting an 82-64 rout before 6,392 fans at Qwest Center Omaha that earned them a spot in the CBI's best-of-three championship series against coach Dana Altman and his Oregon Ducks.

"Every time before a game, we talk about being the team that throws the first punch," Creighton center Gregory Echenique said. "To be able to do that tonight, we let the other team know that it was not going to be easy."

Equally important was what followed. The Bluejays improved to 22-14 by never letting the Knights get closer than six points after the opening blitz. They led by 21 at halftime and by 30 with 7:01 to play.

"You want to jump on teams from the start every game," Bluejays center Kenny Lawson said. "When we hit them with that 10-0 run, I was thinking, 'Wow, is this the same team?'"

"It was amazing and crazy, but the more impressive part was how we were able to sustain that energy for most of the game."

As the seconds ticked down near the end, the Creighton student section started changing, "We want Altman, we want Altman."

And that's exactly who the Bluejays are going to get in the final series. Altman, Creighton's coach the previous 16 seasons, will return to Qwest Center Omaha with Oregon on Monday to open the series. The Ducks secured their spot late Wednesday with a 79-71 win over Boise State.

The first game will be played in Omaha at 7 p.m. Monday, with the second and third, if necessary, to be contested in Eugene, Ore., on Wednesday and April 1.

"It's going to be weird," said guard Antoine Young, referring to facing the coach who offered him a Creighton scholarship when he was still a sophomore in high school. "He basically took me in when I was really young, and I never thought I'd see him on the opposite side."

"But I've taken so much from this year. I've had so much fun, and I've been blessed with this situation. I'm ready to go swing away with my team and have some more fun."

Creighton, which had averaged 66.8 points in its first 33 games, has piled up 269 points and won by double digits in each of its three tournament games. The reason for that kind of improvement? Look no further than Young. The junior point guard, who didn't score in the first-round win over San Jose State, has 38 points in the past two games. He also has handed out 27 assists in the three CBI games — matching his career-high 10 on Wednesday — while not committing a turnover.

"I've never seen anything like what Antoine has accomplished in these three games," Creighton coach Greg McDermott said.

"Twenty-seven assists and no turnovers, and our other ball-handler, Jahenns (Manigat), has 10 assists and one turnover.

"You get 37 assists and one turnover in three games from your primary ball-handlers, you're going to have a chance to be pretty efficient offensively. But the way Antoine has finished the season in these three games, he's really taken a quantum leap. That's paying dividends for us now, and it will be moving forward."

Creighton, which had struggled at the start of its CBI wins over San Jose and Davidson, was ahead 6-0 60 seconds into Wednesday's game. Doug McDermott made 3-point shots on Creighton's first two possessions, forcing UCF coach Donnie Jones to call a quick timeout.

McDermott scored on a fast-break layup on the next possessions, then fed Echenique for a dunk to make it 10-0 less than two minutes into the game. After UCF scored on its fifth possession, Young scored on a layup and then buried a 3-pointer for a 15-2 lead with 15:49 left in the first half.

That's exactly the kind of start that the travel-weary Knights didn't need. UCF didn't arrive in Omaha until 2:30 in the afternoon after having trouble securing air transportation.

Attempts by the CBI to secure commercial passage Tuesday were unsuccessful, and a charter flight was scheduled to leave late Tuesday, but the plane was not available.

The Knights finally got out of Orlando on a 30-seat turboprop at 8 a.m. Wednesday. The plane had to stop in Memphis, Tenn., to refuel, and UCF finally touched down in Omaha by mid-afternoon.

"We were well aware of the travel problems that Central Florida had getting here, and we understand how that can impact your preparation for a game," Greg McDermott said. "We really felt like we wanted to be a little overaggressive to start the game with some of our defensive strategies.

"Fortunately, we hit some shots early. That set the tone for us."

Jones refused to use the travel problems as an excuse but admitted that it did have an impact.

"Creighton played very well and deserved the victory," Jones said. "But this morning, we're still trying to figure out how we're going to get here. We had seven hours of travel.

"That's not our team how we competed tonight. We usually compete at a different level, but that's part of being in the tournament."

Creighton shot 56.7 percent in building its halftime bulge while holding Central Florida to 38.1 percent shooting and forcing 13 turnovers. The Knights finished with 19, and they were able to pad their field-goal percentage to .489 with some late easy baskets off the press against Creighton's reserves.

Echenique led Creighton with a season-high 19 points, while Young and McDermott each had 16. Lawson and Josh Jones each chipped in 11.

Keith Clanton's 26 points paced the 21-12 Knights, but UCF scoring leader Marcus Jordan, who carried a 15.3 scoring average into the game, finished with nine. He missed five of his first six shots before making three straight in garbage time.

Creighton's defensive play brought a smile to McDermott's face. The Bluejays had allowed San Jose State to score 74 and Davidson to get 92 in losing efforts.

"I'll sleep a little better tonight," McDermott said. "I wasn't thrilled how we played (defensively) against Davidson, but Davidson had a lot to do with that."

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• **Video:** See highlights from the Creighton-Central Florida game: