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	60	Final	1 2 T	85	
		Iowa	38 22 60		
		3 Texas	38 47 85		
		Preview Boxscore H2H Recap			

No. 3 Longhorns beat Iowa to reach CBE title game

By JOHN MARSHALL, *AP Sports Writer*

KANSAS CITY, Mo. (AP) Cocking his arm back, Dexter Pittman swooped in for an emphatic slam, the kind that sets the tone for the game, brings the crowd to its feet.

Instead, Pittman hung himself up on the rim, his first shot caroming away as he staggered back, barely able to keep his feet.

A humiliating moment? Maybe for a split second. But Pittman more than made up for it.

Shaking off that early blunder, Pittman scored 11 of his 15 points in the second half and No. 3 Texas survived Cully Payne's miracle shot to beat Iowa 85-60 on Monday night in the semifinals of the CBE Classic.

Texas (3-0) had its usual balanced scoring, with five players in double figures, and shot 55 percent to reach Tuesday's championship game against Pittsburgh. Jordan Hamilton had 16 points, J'Covan Brown 14 and Damion James added 10 points and 12 rebounds.

But it wasn't until the Longhorns turned to their big man in the middle that they finally pulled away. His teammates turning to him exclusively, Pittman scored three straight baskets to start a game-changing 17-0 run for the Longhorns.

"Coach told me and Damion we didn't show the first half," Pittman said, referring to teammate Damion James. "I took it on myself to go out there and make a difference."

Iowa (1-3) made it a lot tougher than Texas or anyone else expected.

Down 14 points early, the Hawkeyes closed the first half with a flurry of 3-pointers, capped by Payne's buzzer-beating heave from beyond midcourt that tied the game. Iowa just ran out of miracles.

The Hawkeyes went nearly 6 minutes without a field goal during Texas' run after Payne's shot and finished the game 8 of 26 from 3-point range, shooting 31 percent overall. Matt Gatens and Brennan Cougill led Iowa with 11 points each.

"We faced a really good team and for stretches we were able to compete," Iowa coach Todd Lickliter said. "We just couldn't do it consistently tonight."

It was supposed to be a monumental mismatch.

Texas has all those athletes and depth so good that coach Rick Barnes isn't sure how he'll find playing time for everyone.

Iowa has been projected no better than middle-of-the-road in the Big Ten and had already lost to Texas-San Antonio and Duquesne.

It started off as a rout-in-the-making.

Iowa spent the early part of the game against the shot clock and started 1 of 12 from 3-point range. Hamilton got hot for Texas at the other end, hitting three straight 3s, and Pittman shook the backboard with a two-handed slam that put the Longhorns up 25-11.

Game over, right?

Not just yet. The Hawkeyes had a little fight in them.

It started with a 3-pointer by Anthony Tucker with 7:07 left. Cougill dropped in another. Two by Devan Bawinkel. Confidence building with each make, the Hawkeyes kept draining 3s, inching closer, pulling the crowd with them.

Payne punctuated it.

Grabbing a rebound after Texas held for the last shot and missed, the freshman from the suburbs of Chicago launched a shot from his own 3-point line toward the other basket.

"I saw the clock winding down and I just threw it up," Payne said.

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(AP Photo/Charlie Riedel)

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It went in.

Half-shocked, the Hawkeyes giddily trotted to the locker room. Fully shocked, the Longhorns walked off tied 38-all in a game they once led by 14.

The momentum carried into the second half, when Gatens popped in a 3-pointer from the wing, putting Iowa up 41-38.

"That was definitely a boost, Matt hitting that shot," Iowa forward Jarryd Cole said.

Then came, well, what was probably inevitable.

Behind Pittman, the Longhorns scored the next 17 points to go up 55-41. The 6-foot-10, 290-pound senior scored the first six points of the run and had an off-the-backboard block of Eric May to help hold the Hawkeyes without a field goal until Gatens scored on a layup with 13 1/2 minutes left.

This time, no Iowa run, no more magic from Payne and Texas gradually pulled away. The Longhorns held Iowa to 22 points on 6-of-32 shooting in the second half, turning what was a close game into a rout.

"They're getting better," Barnes said. "They just need to sustain it for longer periods of time."

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