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Pitt stops Wichita State at CBE Classic

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The Wichita State Shockers learned a lesson for future scheduling. Don't play Pittsburgh in November.

The Panthers' 68-55 win over Wichita State in the semifinals of the CBE Classic on Monday night at the Sprint Center gave Pitt coach Jamie Dixon a 35-0 record in November games.

That streak will be tested in tonight's championship game, when the Panthers, 4-0, face Texas, but Dixon doesn't see anything especially extraordinary about his November dominance.

"We've been pretty good in December and January, also, and February, don't forget those ones," said a smiling Dixon, who led the Panthers to NCAA Tournaments berths in all six of his seasons at Pitt, including a regional final last March.

"You've got to get ready quick. There are some people a little surprised by the character and confidence of some of these guys who didn't play a lot last year or didn't play at all last year."

Pitt freshman guard Travon Woodall, who played only 10 games last year before receiving a medical redshirt because of a knee injury, scored 19 points, and sophomore guard Ashton Gibbs, who came off the bench for all 35 games last season, added 18 in leading the Panthers.

Guard Toure Murry led Wichita State with 20 points, and forward JT Durley had 15.

Pitt was in control throughout against Wichita State, which fell to 2-1. The Shockers trailed 32-21 at halftime, but with the sizable black-and-gold clad Wichita State contingent of fans roaring its approval, Wichita State got within 43-40 when Kenny Manigault set up Durley's layup with 13 minutes to play.

But the Panthers put the game away with a 16-6 run, including nine points by Gibbs, who earlier had missed two of three free throws after he was fouled on a three-point attempt.

"We thought we had quicker guards, and we wanted to use penetration," Dixon said of Woodall and Gibbs, who went to the line 17 times. "They have longer, bigger guards, but we thought we had better guys off the dribble, so we wanted to take advantage of that. We spread the floor a little more, and that was effective for us."

Gibbs didn't let his missed free throws affect him.

"You've got to keep playing," he said. "That's what coach Dixon stresses. Don't let one end of the court affect the other end. Just keep playing hard."

The Shockers didn't help themselves with a sloppy performance in which they had more turnovers, 24, than baskets, 22.

"We looked like a team that missed their senior point guard," Wichita State coach Gregg Marshall said, referring to Clevin Hannah, who will return tonight after serving a three-game suspension by the NCAA because of a Wichita State administrative error regarding his eligibility.

"That's not an excuse. They've got more guys out than we do, but we certainly could have used him."

Marshall credited Pitt for creating problems for the Shockers.

"That's a good basketball team," Marshall said. "They do so many good things to defend you. They make it very difficult for you to score, and they're so mentally tough..."

"We gave them a couple of runs there, but we were too sloppy with our execution."