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Marquette plum out of luck trying to stop Duke's Plumlee

**Forward scores 25 for top-ranked Blue Devils in CBE Classic semifinal
Kansas State routs Gonzaga**

November 22, 2010 | By Shannon Ryan

KANSAS CITY, Mo. — Marquette was looking for answers. Duke was looking for a test.

Both teams found some of what it was looking for in Monday night's CBE Classic semifinal, where No. 1 Duke stiff-armed a second-half comeback by Marquette for an 82-77 victory at the Sprint Center.

The Blue Devils' knockout punch came from Mason Plumlee, the center whose 25 points helped wipe away some Duke fans' tears over the loss of last season's valuable big man Brian Zoubek.

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"(Plumlee) just wore us out," Marquette coach Buzz Williams said.

While Williams focused on Marquette's needs for improvement, there's no doubt Duke left the game a little tuckered out by the Golden Eagles' commendable effort against the most gifted team in the country.

They should consider facing the 6-foot-10 Plumlee a good warmup for No. 22 Gonzaga in Tuesday's consolation game. The Bulldogs, who lost 81-64 to Kansas State in the other semifinal, boasts two 7-footers in Robert Sacre and Kelly Olynyk.

No. 4 Kansas State will face Duke in the Classic final.

After falling behind by 14 first-half points on some questionable shooting and a lack of a star post player to counter Plumlee, Marquette showed the same effort it uses year after year to sneak up on Big East teams and find a back-door entrance to the NCAA tournament.

The Golden Eagles tied the game three times after halftime, mounting a comeback after falling behind 23-9. Senior forward Jimmy Butler scored 22 points and Jae Crowder put in another solid performance off the bench with 15 points.

Marquette's defense harassed Duke into 19 turnovers, almost half of its total 35 it had committed through the first three games of the season.

"They have a unique style of play," Duke coach Mike Krzyzewski said. "They can put four guards on the court. They spread you. They're a difficult team to play against."

That should startle a lot of Marquette's upcoming opponents, but most of them already know that is the Golden Eagles' trademark.

Duke shows no reason why it won't repeat as NCAA champions.

The Blue Devils have the same basketball DNA that earned them last season's title — sound defense, multiple scoring threats and flawless passing. They posted 20 assists on 35 field goals.

Plumlee shot 12 of 16 from the field with 12 rebounds and five blocks, overshadowing plenty of solid performances from teammates.

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Guard Nolan Smith shot 8-for-12 for 18 points with nine rebounds. Freshman point guard Kyrie Irving scored 11 points with seven assists, while senior forward Kyle Singler added another 14 points.

"I don't know that you can pick a poison because everyone is poisonous," Williams said.

After Marquette tied the game 57-57 with 10:28 remaining on a jump shot by Crowder, Duke responded with a 9-0 run with four points coming from Plumlee.

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Williams stressed the need for his team to stick to its identity.

The Golden Eagles' three starting guards — Darius Johnson-Odom, Vander Blue and Dwight Buycks — combined to go 0-for-10 before the half and finished 8 of 27. Johnson-Odom shot just 4-for-15, after missing all eight of his first-half shots.

Williams did get some answers against Duke. He just didn't like all of them.

"I'm proud of them," he said. "When we're not us, we're not going to beat anybody. There's a specific recipe to being 'us.' "

Kansas State has figured out the right mix.

The Wildcats didn't let Gonzaga's superior size rattle them, with 18 points from Maywood native Jacob Pullen.

Kansas State hit 12 of 26 3-pointers in the victory, with four from Pullen, and the Wildcats managed to outrebound the longer Bulldogs 36-23.

sryan@tribune.com

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