

Harris has big night for Zags

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KANSAS CITY, Mo. – Welcome back Elias Harris. And Manny Arop. And Gonzaga getting after it on the glass.

The 22nd-ranked Bulldogs, fueled by Steven Gray's 20 points, Harris's season-high 19 and Arop's career-high 15, held off Marquette 66-63 Tuesday in the third-place game of the CBE Classic at the Sprint Center.

Harris, slowed by injuries to his shoulder and Achilles, scored the game's first six points and had 15 by intermission. He went on to finish with 19 points and eight rebounds. His combined totals in GU's previous three games was 15 points and nine rebounds.

Arop's 15 points surpassed his combined season output of 14. He also snagged four rebounds as Gonzaga, thumped on the boards in its last two games, outrebounded the Golden Eagles 44-28, led by point guard Demetri Goodson's nine. The Bulldogs' 17 offensive boards – Robert Sacre had six and Harris four – generated 21 second-chance points, 17 of those coming in their 24-point second half.

"Some guys stepped up, this guy to my right (Harris) stepped up," Gonzaga coach Mark Few said. "The hardest thing to do in athletics, whether it's baseball, basketball, football or whatever, is when you're not playing very good or what you're accustomed to, is to put an end to it. A lot of guys can't do that mentally or physically.

"I thought 'E' was terrific."

So was Arop, who emerged as a key player down the stretch for Gonzaga last season. He drove across the lane for a couple of baskets, hit a jump shot and made a pair of putbacks in the second half to help the Bulldogs (3-2) stave off a Marquette comeback.

"I came in and got a few rebounds, got myself going and made some plays," Arop said. "That gave the coaches a little confidence to leave me in a little longer and one thing led to another."

Marquette made five 3-pointers in the first 12 minutes, but cooled off when GU went to a zone defense.

“I’ve been kicking myself for getting away from it,” Few said. “We tried it for two or three possessions (against Kansas State) and we actually weren’t on the same page. We got stops, then they got rebounds and kicked it out for 3s. I was telling myself to have more conviction to stay with it and we strung some stops together.”

Gray connected on five 3-pointers in the first half before cooling off in the second half for the second straight game. He made 3 of 4 free throws in the final 50 seconds after Gonzaga had spent most of an 11-point lead with 7 minutes to play. The Bulldogs had ample opportunities to put the game on ice, but they made just 10 of 35 second-half shots (28.6 percent).

GU had just two field goals in the last 7 minutes, one of those created when Harris battled for Arop’s missed free throw and the ball went to Sacre, who hit a shot from close range.

“In the second half, they scored 10 baskets ... and of those 10 baskets, seven were on offensive putbacks,” Marquette coach Buzz Williams said.

The Golden Eagles (4-2) wouldn’t go away. Jimmy Butler, who scored a team-high 22 points, almost single-handedly brought Marquette back. His three-point play narrowed GU’s lead to 63-60 with 1:58 left. He nailed a 3-pointer on a designed inbound play to trim the deficit to two with 43.7 ticks remaining.

After Gray made 1 of 2 free throws, the Golden Eagles had one last chance to tie, but Williams was forced to call timeout with 2.5 seconds left when a play stalled far away from the basket. The best Marquette could get was a 35-footer by Butler that was off target at the buzzer.

Harris was engaged from the outset, taking the team’s first four shots. He made 8 of 19 shots while playing a season-high 37 minutes.

“I don’t know what happened in the other games, maybe I was thinking too much or over-analyzing myself,” he said. “I said to myself, ‘Just go out and play aggressive and hard.’ That’s what the coaches told me and I should have known better. When I play aggressive, it’s hard to guard me and it helps my offense and it helps my team out.”