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 Golden Eagles

Duke 82, Marquette 77

No. 1 Duke just out of Marquette's reach



MCT

Duke's Mason Plumlee dominated Marquette with 25 points, 12 rebounds and five blocked shots

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Kansas City — There was no upset magic for the Marquette Golden Eagles in Kansas City this time around.

Four years after beating Duke in the same city for the CBE Classic championship, the defending national champion and No. 1-ranked Blue Devils proved to be too big and too skilled for MU to handle in the same tournament.

The Golden Eagles used a big run to pull even midway through the second half but couldn't finish the job and eventually fell, 82-77, in the teams' semifinal matchup at the Sprint Center on Monday night.

Four players scored in double figures for Duke, which shot 54.7% for the game. But it was 6-foot-10 Mason Plumlee who did the most damage, putting up game highs of 25 points, 12 rebounds and five blocked shots as the Blue Devils (4-0) used a 13-2 run to turn around what had been a 57-57 game with 10 minutes 28 seconds remaining.

Nolan Smith added 18 points, Kyle Singler 14 and Kyrie Irving 11 for Duke, which led from the tip to the final buzzer.

"I don't know that you can pick a poison, because everyone's poisonous," coach Buzz Williams said of Duke's balance.

The loss dropped MU's all-time record against No. 1-ranked teams to 1-7. The Golden Eagles (4-1), who got 22 points from Jimmy Butler, 15 off the bench from Jae Crowder and 13 from Darius Johnson-Odom, will play Gonzaga at 6:45 p.m. Tuesday.

Johnson-Odom, who went scoreless on 0-for-7 shooting in the first half, hit his first two looks in the second - a pretty reverse layup and a three from the left corner - a great sign for the Golden Eagles.

MU eventually whittled Duke's lead down to 48-43 just prior to the first media timeout, and after a three from the Blue Devils' Andre Dawkins proceeded to embark on a 10-2 run to pull even at 53-53 with 11:21 left.

A three-point play by Johnson-Odom knotted it up and got the fans - most of whom were Kansas State fans waiting for the nightcap - into the game and behind the Golden Eagles, much in the way fans in the NCAA tournament tend to pull for the underdog.

The game remained tied as late as the 10:28 mark after a layup from Crowder made it 57-57. At that point Duke made its move.

Keyed by an offensive board by Plumlee that led to a Smith three, the Blue Devils proceeded to deliver a gut punch to the Golden Eagles in the form of a 13-2 run that opened Duke's lead to 70-59 with 7:28 left.

"I thought the best 7 minutes of the game were from the 10-minute mark to the 3-minute mark for us," said Duke coach Mike Krzyzewski. "There was a lot of pressure, the game got tied, and I thought our kids responded beautifully."

As he had been all game to that point, Plumlee proved too much for MU down low, scoring six of Duke's points in the run while also helping limit MU's looks from in close on the other end. All told, he scored 18 points in the second half.

"He's a really good player," Williams said. "Plumlee is good off the bounce, can hold his position and get deep catches. And I would say of his six offensive rebounds, he scored off four of them."

The Golden Eagles, meanwhile, committed four turnovers during the Blue Devils' run, including on a charge by Johnson-Odom that wiped away a layup and a chance for a three-point play.

MU pulled to within eight with 2:42 left on a steal and breakaway dunk from Crowder, and then seven at 82-75 on a layup by Vander Blue, but it wasn't enough.

"We didn't get back, and we took a lot of unexpected shots that led to transition points for them," Butler said. "We just let up in a lot of different areas in our game."

MU, which shot 52.9% in the second half, got something of an unexpected lift in the first from Davante Gardner.

The freshman forward, who injured his shoulder on Saturday in the win over South Dakota, checked in at the 9:15 mark and almost immediately scored on a nice post move.

It couldn't have come at a better time for the Golden Eagles, who just a couple minutes earlier had given up wide-open threes to the Blue Devils on three consecutive possessions as Duke opened a 23-9 lead, prompting Williams to call a quick timeout.

Gardner's basket at the 8:53 mark was the first of three straight as MU finally settled down and started stringing some stops together. He finished with nine points and four boards in 15 minutes.

Junior Cadougan, who got an early call off the bench in place of Dwight Buycks at the point, knocked down his first three of the season to pull MU to within 30-24 with 4:40 left.

Duke answered with a quick 6-2 run to once again stretch its advantage to double digits.

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