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RUTGERS 83, UMASS 75

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Still no luck for UMass

By Chuck Betson, Globe Correspondent | November 28, 2009

ATLANTIC CITY - In a place where losers fuel the local economy, the University of Massachusetts is fitting right in.

UMass lost its fourth straight game at Boardwalk Hall, 83-75, to Rutgers last night in the Legends Classic, with the previous three losses coming in the Atlantic 10 tournament over the last three seasons.

Ricky Harris had 22 points for UMass, 20 in the second half, and Anthony Gurley scored 19. But it wasn't enough to offset a balanced Rutgers offense that placed five players in double figures. The Scarlet Knights (3-1) were led by 22 points from Michael Rosario.

UMass (2-3) seemed totally out of synch at times and trailed by 16 in the first half, but made a run in the second half and trailed, 79-75, with 91 seconds left after Harris hit a 3-pointer. But Rutgers put the game away at the foul line.

"Maybe we can change our luck down here when we come back for the A-10 tournament in March," said UMass coach Derek Kellogg. "I have a team with freshmen and sometimes they don't play like freshmen and other times they do. I am still trying to get a feel for this team, but it is very early."

Kellogg said he needed a better first-half effort from Harris, who had just 2 points and two fouls in eight minutes entering the break.

"I need Ricky to play the way he played in the second half for this team to win," Kellogg said. "I'm not blaming him for the loss, but we need him to play the way he did in the second half. He was just out of his game in the first half."

Said Harris: "I was a little too jumpy at the start and I got two quick fouls and I backed off. I felt more in the flow in the second half."

Rutgers coach Fred Hill commended UMass for its comeback.

"They made the game hectic in the second half," Hill said. "They threw some different defensive looks at us. But we held on and this is a very good win for us."

UMass trailed, 46-35, at halftime largely because of Rosario, who scored the first 10 points for the Scarlet Knights on his way to an 18-point half.

UMass finished with a 39-32 rebounding edge thanks to Sean Carter's game-high 10 boards.

In today's consolation game (5:30 p.m.), the Minutemen will face second-ranked Michigan State, which was upset by Florida, 77-74. Spartans coach Tom Izzo will be seeking his school-record 341st victory. ■