



Glassboro native Brian Oliver's 32 points does not lift Georgia Tech over Syracuse

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Brendan Prunty/The Star-Ledger

At one point — after Georgia Tech's Brian Oliver knocked down his sixth 3-pointer of the night — Syracuse coach Jim Boeheim threw his hands up at his team. His point guard, Scoop Jardine, was the only one who mustered a response.

It was a shrug.

Because frankly, when a player scores 32 points like Oliver did last night, there are no answers. Just gestures.

"He made some very difficult shots," Boeheim said. "Very difficult shots. The last 10-12 minutes, we were just trying to guard him. We weren't worrying about too many other guys on their team."

In the end, the Glassboro native Oliver's monster night wasn't enough to knock off the ninth-ranked team in the country. Syracuse exerted its will against Georgia Tech, 80-76, to win the Legends Classic championship last night at Boardwalk Hall in Atlantic City. But the man who is referred to around the Yellow Jackets program as "Mr. Everything," served notice.

You had better guard him.

"Zones (defenses) are what I love because I am a shooter," Oliver said. "I know I can make deeper 3s than I usually take. And I just saw the opportunities at times and I got hot and kept going."



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Syracuse won the Legends Classic in Atlantic City and remained undefeated.

Oliver's night had the Orange trying to stave off the upset bid for the second straight game. At the half, the 6-6 sophomore forward had 18 points and had drained four of his seven attempts from 3-point range.

But once the second half began, Oliver seemed to hit another gear.

"They were definitely keying in on me making sure I didn't get any open looks," he said. "When I would catch the ball they were right in my face. So I just had to try and do other things to try and get open."

With Georgia Tech trailing at halftime, 38-36, Oliver immediately picked up where he left off. Oliver drained back-to-back 3-pointers and then a midrange jumper to give Georgia Tech another lead.

In fact, Oliver had 26 of his team's first 49 points of the night. But there was only so much that the Yellow Jackets man of the night could do to try and pull the upset.

Syracuse — which had struggled in the semifinals Friday night, barely beating Michigan — continued to keep the game close until it could strike.

The Orange got big baskets from juniors Kris Joseph (19 points) and Jardine (15 points) as they began to pull away from Georgia Tech late in the second half. Syracuse also got a double-double from center Rick Jackson, who had 10 points and 14 rebounds and was named the tourney's MVP.

Still, even in defeat, it was hard for anyone to ignore the night that Oliver put together.

Having played at William Penn in Delaware and Virginia's Oak Hill Academy in high school, it was a nice — albeit, bittersweet — homecoming.

"I mean, it's tough to leave everything out there on the floor," Oliver said. "It's not just for me to have a great game. It's not the ending that I wanted. Yeah, I scored a lot, but it's for nothing because we didn't get the win."

UTEP beat Michigan, 65-56, in the consolation game.

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