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No. 18 Vanderbilt beats Oregon State 64-62

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Bill Kostroun / AP Photo

Vanderbilt forward Rod Odom puts up a shot as he is double-teamed by Oregon State forwards Angus Brandt, left, and Eric Moreland, right, during the first half of an NCAA college basketball game in the Legends Classic on Monday, Nov. 21, 2011 in East Rutherford, N.J. Vanderbilt won 64-62.

Craig Robinson really likes his Oregon State squad. The coach likes it enough that would have loved to have been a teammate.

"For the first time in 17 years I want to be on a team and not just coach them," the former Princeton player said after the Beavers lost 64-62 to No. 18 Vanderbilt on Monday night in the championship game of the TicketCity Legends Classic. "They are so unselfish and so much fun to watch."

Oregon State surprised Texas in the semifinals on Saturday night with a 100-95 overtime victory. The Beavers just couldn't pull off the tournament double at the Izod Center.

This is the fourth season at Oregon State for Robinson, the brother-in-law of President Barack Obama, and the best of them has been a .500 record. Last season ended with an 11-20 mark.

Ahmad Starks, who finished with 16 points and five assists, was asked what the difference was between this team and others under Robinson at Oregon State.

"The big difference is team camaraderie, how we all bond playing for each other," he said. "During the comeback we were all talking. We know the game isn't over. That's the biggest thing."

Robinson quickly spoke up.

"I agree with him," he said.

Brad Tinsley hit a 15-foot jumper with 4.5 seconds left for Vanderbilt, which received a stellar defensive effort from Jeffrey Taylor against Oregon State's Jared Cunningham, who had 35 and 37 points, respectively, in his previous two games.

"He did a great job on Cunningham all game. Jeff left it all out there," Vanderbilt coach Kevin Stallings said. "It was a solid outing defending their best player. Jeff has grown up and matured to handle that responsibility. We made some big adjustments to keep him off the foul line. He had 23 foul shots the other night and we kept him down (to five) tonight. I'll take that. It was a big emphasis for the entire team to guard him. When he had the ball, they all had to guard him."

Cunningham finished with nine points on 3-for-9 shooting.

"Jared's a marked man now," Robinson said. "We expect Jared to understand that and help others get involved, even though he was being covered so tightly. He had seven steals. He affects the game even when he's not scoring 35 points a game."

John Jenkins, Vanderbilt's top scorer at 23 points per game and the tournament MVP, finished with 14 points for the Commodores (4-1), who led by eight with 10:10 to play. Taylor added 13 points and Tinsley had nine.

"Day in and day out, John Jenkins has proven to be one of the best shooters in the country," Tinsley said. "John is such a great weapon that it was only natural that they would flood to him."

"Coach is a genius in drawing up last-second plays," Tinsley said. "Jeffery is also a good scorer. When it came to me, I was glad to get the chance to take the shot."

He almost didn't, because he nearly slipped on the play.

"We first went to see if John could get a shot and we were looking for a play we run in the last seconds, but I got the ball," Tinsley said. "Steve (Tchiengang) set a great pick and I got the ball. I was afraid after I slipped. I almost fell down. I slipped and faded with my left foot, but I was able to square up and get the shot there. I felt good when it left my hands."

Devon Collier had 19 points for the Beavers (4-1).

Vanderbilt, especially Taylor, did an outstanding defensive job on Cunningham, who had two points in the second half. The junior guard scored 35 points against Hofstra and 37 in a semifinal win over Texas, but he just couldn't get open looks against Vanderbilt.

That included the game's final play, when Cunningham drove to the basket as time ran out but Taylor stayed with him and the ball didn't even hit the rim. The Oregon State bench was yelling for a foul, but replays showed it was a clean play by Taylor.

"The last play of the game doesn't cost you the game because there was something else in the game you could have done," Robinson said. "Having said that, there was a lot of contact the whole last play. I'm not complaining. There was a lot of contact."

Oregon State used a 5-0 run to get within 57-56 with 4:37 to play. Tchiengang hit a 3-pointer 13 seconds later.

The Beavers tied the game at 60 on a reverse layup by Joe Burton with 2:13 to go. Taylor gave the Commodores the lead with 1:42 left after gathering a loose ball under the basket.

Oregon State tied it for the last time on a jumper by Starks with 33 seconds to play.

Jenkins, who had 28 points in the semifinal win over North Carolina State, struggled from the field and finished 5 of 13.

"Our guys know how to function in the last 2 minutes. They know how to win," Stallings said. "They're supposed to know what's supposed to happen at the end of the game."

Oregon State, which entered the game averaging 90.2 points, was just 2 of 14 from 3-point range, with Cunningham missing both of his attempts.

The Beavers were trying for their first 5-0 start since 1985-86.

Vanderbilt, which was seventh in the preseason Top 25, is still without center Festus Ezeli, who is expected to miss about another month with a knee injury

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