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SYRACUSE 95, NO. 13 CALIFORNIA 73

Syracuse Feels at Home Again in Garden

By BRIAN HEYMAN

When Syracuse was at Madison Square Garden in March winning its unforgettable six-overtime marathon against Connecticut in the Big East tournament quarterfinals, the Orange's big three announced their presence loudly.

Point guard Jonny Flynn contributed 34 points and 11 assists in 67 minutes. Forward Paul Harris posted 29 points and 22 rebounds. Shooting guard Eric Devendorf poured in 22 points. They were the top scorers for a team that lost in the Big East final, went to the Round of 16 in the [N.C.A.A.](#) tournament and won 28 games.

None of them are back, but Syracuse's shelves are not bare. The Orange showed off its potential Thursday night, upending No. 13 California, 95-73, at the Garden in the semifinals of the 2K Sports Classic benefiting Coaches vs. Cancer.

Syracuse (3-0), which received a career-high 22 points from the sophomore point guard Scoop Jardine and 17 points, 11 rebounds and 6 blocks from the junior forward Wes Johnson, advanced to play Friday against No. 6 North Carolina, the defending national champion, which defeated No. 15 [Ohio State](#), 77-73, in the late game.

"We feel better about this year's team than last year's team," said Syracuse guard Andy Rautins. "Everybody is so unselfish. Everybody is going within the offense. And we have a great identity as a hard-working defensive team."

Rautins has moved in as a full-time starter for Coach Jim Boeheim after starting 10 games last season, when he hit 102 3-pointers.

Then there is the athletic 6-7 Johnson, a transfer from [Iowa State](#). He started two seasons for the Cyclones, earning a spot on the Big 12's all-rookie team as a freshman. Johnson is averaging 14.7 points and 7.3 rebounds so far after sitting out last season.

Two people are playing the part of Flynn, a lottery pick by the [Timberwolves](#). Brandon Triche, a freshman, has been starting at the point, but is sharing the role with Jardine, who sat out last season with an injury.

Arinze Onuaku, a 6-9 senior center-forward, and a 6-9 junior power forward, Rick Jackson, are returning starters who provide toughness inside.

"They're big, strong and long," said Mike Montgomery, Cal's second-year coach.

The Bears (2-1) were the preseason pick to win the Pacific-10, which they have not done since 1960. Montgomery has four starters back, but one of them, the senior forward Theo Robertson, was out with a foot injury.

Cal went 22-11 last season and led the nation in 3-point shooting at 42.7 percent, but Syracuse held the Bears to 6-of-20 shooting from long range.

After trailing by 5-0, the Orange took control, creating havoc with its 2-3 zone and turning defense into offense. Syracuse dominated inside and out.

Jardine lit a spark, hitting two free throws, then turning a steal into a layup to help Syracuse take a 30-14 lead. He had 13 points at the half. Johnson also made his presence felt in the first half with 10 points, 7 rebounds and 4 blocks.

Only 14 points by the senior point guard Jerome Randle and the Orange's wayward free-throw shooting (10 of 19) kept the Bears in the neighborhood in the first half, which ended with Syracuse leading, 44-33.

Randle finished with 25 points, but the Orange opened the margin to 24 in the second half.

"I think we're starting to learn offensively how to work with our big guys," Boeheim said. "We haven't really done that the last couple of years."

In the second game, Ohio State (2-1) trailed North Carolina (4-0) by as many as 19 points in the second half, but the Buckeyes staged a furious rally to cut the lead to 75-73 on a 3-pointer by the junior guard Jon Diebler with 11.3 seconds left. The sophomore point guard Larry Drew II countered with two free throws to clinch the outcome.

"It was a unique game in the sense that they are strong on the perimeter and they would like to have more depth and size upfront, and we are the opposite," North Carolina Coach Roy Williams said. "We have depth and size upfront and we would like to have more depth on the perimeter."

He added: "I liked our competitiveness tonight. It is a very good basketball team we beat. I think we have a good chance of being a very good basketball team. I wanted it to come sooner than it is coming to us."