

Longhorns beat Illinois in overtime

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AMERICAN-STATESMAN STAFF

Updated: 12:06 a.m. Friday, Nov. 19, 2010

Published: 11:57 p.m. Thursday, Nov. 18, 2010

Rick Barnes wasn't blowing smoke by saying that he really likes the latest version of the Longhorns basketball team.

The Longhorns, unranked in The Associated Press preseason poll for the first time in 10 years, hustled on defense, executed often enough on offense and defeated No. 13 Illinois 90-84 in overtime Thursday at Madison Square Garden.

The victory in the semifinals of the Coaches vs. Cancer Classic puts Texas (3-0) in the championship game against No. 5 Pittsburgh tonight at 6:30.

A victory would be the 500th for Barnes as a head coach at four schools.

Jordan Hamilton led the Longhorns with 25 points and grabbed seven rebounds.

Tristan Thompson, a 6-foot-8-inch freshman, filled the stat sheet with 20 points, seven rebounds, six blocks, four assists and three steals.

Gary Johnson scored 16, including four of the first six in overtime.

The Longhorns converted just 25 of 44 free throws — Thompson hit 4 of 12 — but made 10 of 13 during one late critical stretch.

Guard Demetri McCamey led Illinois (3-1) with 22 points.

Cory Joseph gave the Longhorns a 75-73 lead with a 15-foot jump shot at the 24.6 second mark of regulation. Before that, the Longhorns had gone more than seven minutes without a field goal.

But Illinois pulled even 13 seconds later when freshman Jereme Richmond drove inside and scored.

The Longhorns pushed the ball back upcourt, but Joseph missed a jumper and Dogus Balbay was short with a rushed follow shot from the perimeter at the buzzer.

The Longhorns scored the first eight points of overtime.

The game was tied at halftime thanks to a late three-point shot by senior Mike Tisdale, Illinois' 7-1 center.

Tisdale does not attempt many of those, but he's not bad. Before Thursday, Tisdale had converted 8 of 25 in his career.

He was not the star big man in the half, though.

Thompson scored 12 points in the period, showing remarkable diversity while converting six of seven shots.

Thompson made a quick driving dunk for one basket.

On another, he missed a driving shot and quickly elevated to tip in the rebound.

He also displayed a mid-range turnaround jump shot. Thompson made three assists, two blocks and two steals in the half.

Hamilton was the leading scorer in the half with 15 points. He hit six of nine shots, including two of three three-pointers. He still forced some bad shots, but he made a few of them.

McCamey and Paul Brandon scored 12 apiece in the half, each hitting a pair of three-pointers.

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