



No. 13 Illinois holds on to beat Maryland

AP Associated Press

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NEW YORK (AP)

Illinois was thinking about last season and the Illini didn't want the same thing to happen to them that might have cost them a berth in the NCAA tournament.

The Illini rebounded from an overtime semifinal loss to Texas with an 80-76 victory over **Maryland** in the third-place game Friday in the 2K Sports Classic.

Unlike last year when the Illini allowed one loss in an early season tournament turn into two, they were more patient on offense and more effective from long range.

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"A year ago we were in this situation, losing a disappointing game in Vegas, and don't respond well the next night," Illinois coach Bruce Weber said. "We had a very, very short turnaround. We didn't get back to the hotel until 1 last night. ... It was a mental toughness thing. They responded."

Demetri McCamey, D.J. Richardson and Tyler Griffey all hit three 3-pointers and the Illini, who came into the game shooting 34.5 percent from 3-point range, finished 10 for 19 (52.6 percent) from behind the arc.

"Last year we lost to Utah and Bradley and it came to haunt us down the stretch, so we just wanted to split them and at the same time get better as a team," McCamey said. "... Our main focus coming into the tournament was to determine what kind of team we are.

"You've got to bounce back the next day and get better, and I think last year we shut down and was mad about the first game and we lost."

He was quick to explain the difference in the Illini in the short turnaround.

"Last night was more dribbling, iso, one-on-one, doing some things we usually don't do, and it hurt us against Texas," he said.

"Tonight we moved the ball."

McCamey finished with 20 points and seven assists, while Richardson and Griffey both had nine points, all on 3-pointers.

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It's not unusual for McCamey and Richardson to hit 3s, they both entered the game shooting just over 40 percent from beyond the arc. Griffey, however, is a different story. The 6-foot-8 sophomore had missed all three of his 3-point attempts this season before hitting his first three shots from behind the line.

"Finally, I got to break out of a little slump," Griffey said with a smile. "It's a pop and pop and I'm the second pop. It was there and they fell through today."

Griffey's 3s all came in a run spanning halftime that saw the Illini (4-1) hit eight 3s in 10 attempts as they turned a 40-36 lead into a 56-47 advantage with 12:47 to play.

Illinois went up by as many as 12 points - 69-57 with 5:35 left. But Maryland (3-2) was able to get as close as 78-76 with 7.3 seconds left on a 3 by Terrell Stoglin. The Illini missed four straight free throws and five of eight from the 1:13 mark until Brandon Paul made two with 6.4 seconds left to seal the win in the tournament that benefits Coaches vs. Cancer.

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"The one thing we told them is they're not going to quit," Weber said. "It's Coach (Gary) Williams, it's the way he is, they're not going to quit. ... We had to play till the last 15 seconds."

Stoglin had 17 points for Maryland, while Jordan Williams had 15 points and 13 rebounds, getting all his points and 11 rebounds in the second half.

"I'm really proud of the team," Williams said. "Both nights here we could have folded, we didn't. We've got some new parts we're trying to get in there and we're trying to find a good rotation."

"I found out a lot about our team the last two nights. We came up here wanting to win the tournament obviously, like we did the last time we were here, but I found out some things I couldn't have found out in practice."

Illinois, which came into the game shooting 34.5 percent from 3-point range, finished 10 for 19 (52.6 percent) from behind the arc while the Terrapins were 5 of 18 (27.8 percent).

"They're a great streak shooting team. They seem to feed off each other. They're unselfish," Williams said. "Wherever you make a mistake defensively, the ball seems to end up with that player. ... They're going to make some, you just don't want to give them second shots. They're really good at kicking the ball out to the 3-point line when you give

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them second shots."

Maryland, which lost 79-70 to No. 5 Pittsburgh in the semifinals, has lost seven straight games against non-conference ranked opponents, a streak that dates to a win over No. 5 Michigan State on Nov. 27, 2008.

Illinois, which lost 90-84 in overtime to Texas in the semifinals, improved its record at Madison Square Garden to 3-6.

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