

Hamilton scores 28; UT just short of Pitt in final

men's COLLEGE basketball pittsburgh 68, texas 66

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They appear to have undergone a renewal after the Longhorns' collapse last season, the much-criticized coach and his talented but erratic forward.

Coach Rick Barnes' Longhorns, led in scoring by sophomore Jordan Hamilton, defeated one nationally ranked team Thursday night and nearly pulled off another upset on Friday.

The unranked Longhorns fell short against No. 5 Pittsburgh when freshman Cory Joseph missed the rim with an off-balance shot as he drove along the right baseline with four seconds remaining. Pittsburgh won the 2K Sports Classic championship game, 68-66 at Madison Square Garden, but the Longhorns left the building knowing they could have a nice future this season.

"We're not even close to being as good as we can be," Barnes said.

Hamilton scored 25 points during a victory over No. 13 Illinois on Thursday. He came back with a career-best 28, and eight rebounds, against Pittsburgh (5-0).

He did not sound particularly impressed with the Longhorns (3-1) or himself in defeat. Asked what they took away from the two games, he said, "second place." He said that the 12:30 a.m. finish against Illinois was "no excuse."

Hamilton also mentioned that Barnes kept shuttling him into the game for offense and out on defense down the stretch Friday, because of his deficiencies on defense. "That's what I'm going to work on as soon as I get back to Austin," Hamilton said. "Footwork and agility with (strength) coach Todd Wright."

Even so, without Hamilton, the Longhorns could not have challenged Pittsburgh.

Hamilton scored 19 in the second half, hitting three three-point shots. He made another three-point play - a driving shot and free throw.

His follow shot in the lane with 10 seconds remaining left Pittsburgh with a 68-66 lead.

Then Barnes opted for a strategy that provided the Longhorns with a chance to tie the game.

Ashton Gibbs, the Pittsburgh guard who scored 24 points, shoots free throws with 81 percent accuracy. Barnes assigned two players to guard Gibbs on the inbounds pass after Hamilton's follow shot. Pitt passed instead to Travon Woodall, who had missed two free throws on one trip to the line in the second half. Woodall missed the front end of a one-and-one with nine seconds left.

Gary Johnson grabbed the rebound, the Longhorns advanced the ball, and Joseph missed his shot.

"Whoever got the ball (after) the rebound was going to go and drive it," Barnes said. "We got too deep."

Barnes said he was disappointed with the Longhorns' effort and lack of energy early in the game. "We didn't cut hard, didn't move the ball," he said. "We got stagnant."