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## Pitt defeats Texas at Garden

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Pittsburgh coach Jamie Dixon was at a loss for words.

He had been asked to respond to the perception that his program, one of the most successful in the country over the last eight years, wins ugly.

"It's better than losing ugly, I guess" he finally said. "Or losing pretty."

Make no mistake about it, none of the No. 5 Panthers are going to apologize for their lack of style points. Their emphasis is trying to prevent opponents from scoring any points. Or getting any rebounds. Or being physically and emotionally worn down by Pitt's offense, which is a bumper-car of picks and screens.

Texas was the latest team to be chewed up by the meat grinder known as Pitt basketball. The Longhorns walked out of the Garden last night 68-66 losers in the title game of the 2K Sports Classic benefiting Coaches vs. Cancer.

Every key statistic was almost even, but Pitt (5-0), behind junior Ashton Gibbs, made the plays Texas didn't. Gibbs converted two free throws with 23 seconds left for a 68-64 lead.

Texas (3-1), led by Jordan Hamilton's game-high 28 points, closed to within 68-66 and had a chance to tie or win, but Cory Joseph ran into a Steel City wall of defenders and threw up a shot that didn't get rim.

"I liked how we finished both games," said Dixon.

The Panthers closed out Maryland 79-70 in the semifinals. The difference last night was Pitt's poise and ball security (16 assists, 11 turnovers), which was much better than Texas' (11 assists, 17 turnovers).

"I think Pitt's a team that really understands their roles," Texas coach Rick Barnes said.

Consider this: When Gibbs, who scored 19 of his 24 points in the second half, was announced as the tournament's MVP, he wanted his teammates to accompany him when he retrieved the trophy.

"It's a team game," said Gibbs. "I wouldn't have done it without my teammates. They screen for me. And they look for me. In open spots, they got me the ball. It's a team game. I'm a team player first and then individual awards will come with it."

Pitt, with the help of a procession of players from the metropolitan area, have turned the Garden into their second home. They won the Big East title here in 2003 and 2008 and are 26-11 at the Garden since the 2000-01 season.

Dixon, who is so intense on the sidelines one fears he'll burst a vein in his neck, has gotten his players to buy into a philosophy of selflessness, defense, teamwork.

Steel City Hoosiers.

"We got guys from winning programs," he said. "They've won all their lives."

Gibbs, from Scotch Plains, N.J., led Seton Hall Prep to a 23-6 record as a senior. He has filled the void once occupied by LeVance Fields of Brooklyn and Xaverian High.

Dixon was asked if this team has the potential to be the deepest he has coached in seven-plus seasons.

"Everyone's deep in November," he said.

Not this deep. Pitt is good, deep and ugly. Don't expect the Panthers to apologize anytime soon.

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In the consolation game, Demetri McCamey scored 20 points and went 3-for-3 from 3-point range to lead No. 13 Illinois (4-1) to an 80-76 victory over Maryland (3-2) in a game that could be a preview of a Sweet 16 matchup. The Illini converted 10-of-19 3's and scored 28 field goals off 22 assists.

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