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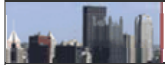


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Pitt knocks off Texas at Madison Square Garden

By **John Grupp**
PITTSBURGH TRIBUNE-REVIEW
Saturday, November 20, 2010

NEW YORK — It's not Thanksgiving yet, and Pitt already is building a resume worthy of March.

The No. 5 Panthers beat a major-conference opponent for the second time in as many nights, defeating Texas, 68-66, in the final of the 2K Sports Classic on Friday night at Madison Square Garden.

Less than 24 hours after outmuscling Maryland of the ACC, the Panthers (5-0) clamped down on high-scoring, athletic Texas. Tournament MVP Ashton Gibbs scored 19 of his team-high 24 points in the second half, as Pitt added to its impressive early season ledger.

"It's going to help us down the road," senior guard Brad Wanamaker said. "We played some NCAA teams early on in the season. Young guys got in there and got thrown into the fire and saw what it's like. We will be ready when the Big East comes."

Throw in the victory over a quality Atlantic 10 team (Rhode Island) in the season opener and a pair of 40-point wins against lower-level opponents, and Pitt has done nothing wrong during a 2010-11 season heaping with high expectations.

"We've got something to build on," coach Jamie Dixon said. "It's two good wins, but I think we can learn something from these two wins as well. We've got three quality wins against teams that will definitely be in the RPI top 40 or so. Those are hard to get this early."

Behind sophomore Jordan Hamilton, who scored a career-high 28 points, the Longhorns (3-1) cut a 10-point deficit to 68-66 with 10 seconds to play. Travon Woodall missed the front end of a one-and-one with 12.1 seconds left, giving Texas a final chance. But freshman Cory Joseph raced downcourt and missed a hurried, off-balance shot from the right corner. Nasir Robinson got the loose ball, and Pitt ran out the clock.

"We wanted to take the ball to the basket," Texas coach Rick Barnes said. "We didn't get it. We were going to put pressure on the rim. We got too deep. It just didn't work for us."

Woodall, an all-tournament selection, put defensive pressure on Joseph, who finished 1 for 4 for two points. Woodall finished with seven points, five assists and no turnovers in 22 minutes. He also drew a pair of charges.

"He's a freshman, so I was trying to get him out of control a little bit," Woodall said. "At the end of the game, I kind of had an idea that he would try to take the shot because he hadn't gotten (much), so I just tried to get up in there and bother him."

Gibbs was the only Pitt player to reach double figures. After being held to five first-half points, he scored 10 points in a row, as Pitt took a 49-40 lead with 12:44 left.

"At one point in the middle of the second, I just knew that it was time," Gibbs said. "It was time to step up."

But Pitt, which was outrebounded, 37-35, managed only one field goal in the next five minutes. Texas, behind Hamilton, made it 63-62 with 2:27 to play.

Wanamaker added nine points, six rebounds and five assists, as Pitt denied Barnes his 500th career victory and avenged a 78-62 loss to then-No. 3 Texas in the CBE Classic last November in Kansas City, Mo.

J'Covan Brown added 14 points for Texas, which upset No. 13 Illinois in overtime Thursday.

The victory continued Pitt's impressive November. It marked only the third time in 30 years that Pitt has notched a pair of pre-December wins over two major-conference teams. The Panthers defeated Texas Tech and Washington State in November 2008 and Kentucky and Texas in November 1991.

Photos

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Nasir Robinson
Associated Press

About the writer

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"It's definitely going to help us," Gibbs said. "That's the thing about Coach Dixon. He doesn't back down from challenges. It can only help us for the Big East to come."

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