

St. John's men's basketball team rallies to defeat William & Mary in season opener

Red Storm 74, Tribe 59

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Nerves and Jitters fade away. Talent and teamwork do not.

The enormous potential of what could become the best recruiting class in St. John's history was clouded by anxiety for about 20 minutes Monday night as the Johnnies christened the new college basketball season against William & Mary. But eventually the cloud burned off and the talent came through. The Red Storm raced past the Tribe in the second half and rolled to a 74-59 victory before 4,142 in the opening round of the 2K Sports Coaches vs. Cancer Classic at Carnesecca Arena.

The Johnnies have six new players in their seven-man rotation and most of them actually looked skyward toward the scoreboard to watch the video introduction on the scoreboard as the starting five was announced. But after 20 minutes of mostly tentative play, St. John's obliterated a seven-point halftime deficit in a hail of steals, blocks, fast breaks and dunks to dispatch the Tribe.

"In the first half we were a little tight. We were really excited about the game but we didn't come out ready to play," said guard [Nurideen Lindsey](#), who led the second-half surge with 17 of his team-high 19 points. "In the second half we loosened up and realized that defensively we had to turn it up a notch and get a little more intensity into the game."

St. John's needed a poised force to guide it back and [Lindsey](#) slipped into the role easily. The sophomore junior college transfer is 21 and has overcome the hardship of losing two brothers to the mean streets of West Philadelphia to arrive with the Red Storm. The 2004 murder of older sibling Jilani was followed by the 2009 shooting of younger brother Halim and sent [Lindsey](#) into a deep depression where he gave up basketball for more than a year.

"I just felt like I didn't have any reason of being here anymore," he said last week.

But [Lindsey](#) got his life back on track a little more than a year ago and was there for the Johnnies when they needed his guidance Monday night.

He had eight points and an assist as the Storm opened the second half with a 22-5 run to take control of the game. He added four more in a 9-0 spurt that made it 57-43 with 9:30 to play. He finished shooting 8-for-12 from the floor, with four assists and five steals.

He shows wisdom, such as making a steal and then throwing a bounce pass to [Harkless](#) to finish a break with about four minutes left in the first half.

"He has a little bit of old school because he's older — period," Harrison joked.

"He moves like an old man, too," said [Harkless](#), piling on.

"I just try to make the regular play. From time to time I like to get a little crafty," Lindsey said, before being interrupted by special assistant [Gene Keady](#) playing "Sweet Georgia Brown" on his cell phone. "I just like to make the regular play. I've got a little old-school in my game."

St. John's was coached by assistant Mike Dunlap as [Steve Lavin](#) recovers from prostate cancer surgery.

[Moe Harkless](#) and God'sgift Achiuwa each scored 17 points for the Red Storm.

Guard D'Angelo Harrison said anger and disappointment in the St. John's locker room at intermission helped fuel a full-court press that forced a dozen turnovers in the second half, including five in the 22-5 run.

"The game doesn't start till the second half," said Harrison, who had 14 points. "We were all disappointed in how the first half went. So obviously we came out with fire and intensity and the crowd got (behind the Johnnies) and we had a lot of energy in the second half."