

Williams' Big Night Fuels 55-53 Win at Pepperdine

box score

MALIBU, Calif. - The IUPUI basketball team finished the 2014 Gotham Classic on a high note, claiming a 55-53 win at Pepperdine on Saturday afternoon (Dec. 27). Senior [DavRon Williams](#) finished with a career-high 16 points, nine rebounds and three blocked shots to fuel the win while freshman [Aaron Brennan](#) added 10 points in the win. Junior [Marcellus Barksdale](#) also contributed five points, seven rebounds and seven assists in the victory.

Pepperdine (7-4) was previously undefeated at home this season, but missed two attempts on the final possession as IUPUI (4-9) escaped with its second road win of the year. After [Khufu Najee](#) split a pair of free throws with 8.5 seconds left, Pepperdine's Jeremy Major missed a contested three from the right side and Shawn Olden's wild rebound attempt fell well short at the final horn.

"This is a great win for us," IUPUI Head Coach [Jason Gardner](#) said. "We'd been working towards a win like this all season so far. We've been close, but today, we finished it off. We made enough plays down the stretch to be able to win the game. That shows you part of the growth of this team. Every guy in that locker room contributed to the win, so I'm really happy for our guys."

Olden led three Waves in double-digits with 15 points and Major closed with 14 points on 4-of-8 shooting. Pepperdine's top player, Stacy Davis, finished with 10 points and 10 boards on a 4-of-10 shooting night.

IUPUI fell into an early 7-1 hole and didn't score a field goal until Williams completed a three-point play nearly four minutes into the contest. Williams' bucket kick started an emphatic 16-3 run that included a [P.J. Boutte](#) NBA-range three pointer and a [Leo Svete](#) three-point play in transition. Brennan capped the run with a tough fallaway jumper, putting IUPUI ahead 17-10. Pepperdine would later pull even at 24 all on an Amadi Udenyi jumper before the Jaguars took a 28-27 lead to the break.

Pepperdine used six straight points early in the second half to extend to a 35-32 lead, but stayed stuck on 35 for exactly eight minutes as IUPUI scored the game's next 10 points and never trailed over the final 15-plus minutes. Barksdale put the Jaguars in front for good on a tough drive and the lead later grew to seven on a pair of Najee freebies with 8:27 to play.

The Waves had chances down the stretch, but each time, IUPUI answered the call.

Davis powered in a three-point play chance over Brennan to cut the lead back to one with 5:25 remaining, but Brennan countered with a backdoor layup on IUPUI's next trip. Brennan came up with two key defensive stands late to help the Jaguars reach the finish line.

Clinging to a 50-49 lead, Brennan stood in and drew a charge from Pepperdine's Jett Raines with 2:03 to play, which later led to a Najee 16-footer along the baseline to push the lead back to three. Williams blocked a Davis attempt with 39 seconds left and corralled the defensive board for another key stop and later, Brennan collected a steal against Davis, helping the Jaguars make it a two-possession game with 14.6 left.

IUPUI aided the Waves' comeback hopes by missing 4-of-7 free throw attempts in the final 35.1 seconds, but still managed to improve to 2-0 all-time against Pepperdine. Najee, a California-native, closed with nine points and three assists in the return to his home state as the IUPUI bench outscored Pepperdine's reserves 35-6.

The Jaguars shot just 38.9 percent from the floor and 2-of-11 (18.2 percent) from three-point range, but defended equally well, limiting Pepperdine to just 36.5 percent overall and 5-of-15 (33.3 percent) from three. IUPUI turned it over just 11 times, outscoring the hosts 14-9 in points off turnovers.

"Guys are starting to understand the offense more and more, which has helped us keep the turnovers down," Gardner said. "Again, that's part of the growing up process and shows some maturity from our guys."

IUPUI finished the year's Gotham Classic at 2-2 overall with wins over South Alabama and Pepperdine and losses coming at Howard and Richmond.

IUPUI will cap the non-conference slate on Monday (Dec. 29) when they head back east to face North Carolina Central (9-5) in Durham, N.C., at 7:00 p.m.. The Jaguars won last year's meeting in Indianapolis, 71-65, and Monday's game will complete the home-and-home series with the Eagles. That contest will be heard on WNDE 1260 AM and the iHeartRadio app as Will Flemming (pxp) will call the action.

