

Spalding's jumper lifts Louisville past Albany 70-68

By Steve Bittenbender

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (AP) — Ray Spalding's Louisville teammates call him the human deflector because he gets his hands on everything. Because of that, he had a hand in the Cardinals' comeback Wednesday night.

The Louisville native's jumper with 1:40 left lifted the Cardinals to a 70-68 victory over a resilient Albany squad Wednesday night in the Houzz Gotham Classic presented by TicketIQ.

The Cardinals (9-2) overcame a long drought — they went 8:43 in the second half without a field goal — to reclaim the lead in the final minutes and finished off the Gotham Classic perfect in four games. Wednesday's game was the toughest of the bunch.

The Great Danes (11-3) trailed by as many as 12 in the first half, but they used a 15-1 second half run to storm back. Travis Charles knocked down a pair of free throws with 5:21 left to give Albany a 61-60 lead, its first since the game's opening minute.

However, Spalding, who finished with just seven points in 16 minutes, and Ryan McMahon led the Louisville comeback.

Spalding, a junior, scored four straight points in a 37-second span to give the Cards a 66-65 lead with 100 seconds left. Between those buckets, the 6-foot-10 forward came up with a key steal that led to his game-winning shot.

"He's so long," McMahon said. "Not only does he have quick feet, he has quick hands. That's just an incredible play by him to give us an extra possession and allowed us to get the lead."

McMahon followed that with a 3-pointer to make it a four-point game with 1:02 left. The sophomore guard came off the bench to tie his career high with 15 points on 5-of-10 shooting. He made 5 of 8 from beyond the arc.

The Great Danes had a chance to win at the buzzer, but Devonte Campbell's 3-pointer bounced off the rim. When that shot missed, so too did Albany's only chance for a win against a Power Five conference foe this season.

"You walk in our locker room right now, you would've thought we lost the national championship," Albany coach Will Brown said.

Quentin Snider led the Cardinals with 19 points on 5-of-7 shooting.

Joe Cremo scored 18 to pace the Great Danes.

BIG PICTURE

Albany: The Great Danes came into the game off to their best Division I start ever thanks in some part to their work on the glass. While Albany won the rebounding battle 52-37, it couldn't offset a poor shooting night. The Great Danes shot just 36.5 percent — their second worst of the season — and more importantly, the 21 offensive rebounds resulted in only 13 second-chance points.

Brown said the Cardinals' height affected the Great Danes chances for quality put backs.

"I think when our guys were getting those offensive rebounds, they felt like they were in a forest," Brown said. "Just looking up at all those trees. There wasn't any place to shoot the ball."

Louisville: Interim coach David Padgett said the Cardinals knew Albany would provide a tough, physical test. Despite that, Louisville gave up at least 10 offensive rebounds for the ninth time this season. It will continue to be an area of emphasis for the Cardinals in practice, he said.

"It's always better to learn in a win than a loss," Padgett said.

STAT OF THE NIGHT

While the Cardinals couldn't dominate on the boards, they found other ways to use their size to stymie Albany. The nation's second-best shot blocking team swatted away 10 shots, with Anas Mahmoud tying a career high with nine. It marked the fourth time this season Louisville registered at least 10 blocks.

POLL IMPLICATIONS

Albany isn't a traditional power, but the Great Danes are considered one of the top mid-major teams in college this season. With Louisville receiving votes in the poll, the close win against a possible NCAA Tournament team should keep them no worse than just on the fringe of rejoining the top 25