

Arizona State rolls over Kennesaw State, 91-53

TEMPE, Ariz. (AP) - Arizona State knew what it had in Eric Jacobsen. A physical senior, he was expected to be one of the Pac-12's best big men this season.

Obinna Oleka was more of a question mark. The junior college transfer had not played in two years and failed to score his first two games in the desert.

Now the Sun Devils have a baseline for the athletic junior.

Oleka had a breakout game, scoring 19 points, and teamed with Jacobsen to dominate inside, leading the Sun Devils to a 91-53 victory over Kennesaw State Wednesday night.

"You could see that he was struggling a bit with his confidence, but he's a gifted kid and we believe in his talent," Arizona State coach Bobby Hurley said. "He showed some of his skills tonight and they translate down the line to where I think he'll continue to play well."

Arizona State (2-1) jumped on Kennesaw State early and was never really tested after that despite a sometimes-sloppy first half. The Sun Devils overwhelmed the Owls inside, outscoring them by 22 points while grabbing 29 more rebounds.

Tra Holder had 14 points and Gerry Blakes grabbed a career-high 12 rebounds for Arizona State, which scored 20 points on 17 offensive rebounds.

Jacobsen had 15 points and 10 rebounds, while Obinna made 7 of 9 shots after missing the four combined he took in the first two games.

"He's a big-time player; his size, he can do a lot of things on the court, so hopefully that gave him the confidence to help us win big," Blakes said.

Kennesaw State (0-3) completed a difficult first week under new coach Al Skinner with a third straight loss to a major conference program.

Already tired from opening road games against Alabama and LSU, the Owls needed more than 12 hours to get to Tempe and it showed with a sluggish start. Kennesaw State's players never were able to get their legs under them, shooting 32 percent while Arizona State raced up and down the floor against their defense.

Nigel Pruitt had 19 points to lead Kennesaw State.

"I didn't expect it to be like this, but I knew we were probably going to struggle tonight," Skinner said.

The Sun Devils got the first season under Hurley off to a jittery start, stumbling down the stretch of a 66-63 home loss to Sacramento State that Hurley called embarrassing.

Arizona State bounced back nicely on Friday, rallying from a 10-point first-half deficit to beat Belmont 83-74.

The Sun Devils were sharp early against the Owls, forcing difficult shots on defense while getting out for quick baskets in transition.

Holder was the catalyst.

The sophomore point guard scored two quick baskets and repeatedly got inside Kennesaw State's defense. He also had a nifty behind-the-back pass to set up Savon Goodman for a 3-point play that put the Sun Devils up 11-3.

The Owls were impatient early at times against Arizona State's aggressive man defense. Kennesaw State needed nearly four minutes to score its first points and shot 9 of 32 to trail by 11 at halftime.

"We were slow. Our legs were heavy, we were slow and couldn't get down the floor," Skinner said. "We're a smaller team anyway and to be at a disadvantage that way (tired), it obviously impacted us and you had the results we had."