

Georgia Southern Men's Basketball Tops Troy, 80-77

[box score](#)

STATESBORO, Ga. – Georgia Southern scored 50 points and shot 60.7 percent from the floor in the second half to defeat Troy 80-77 in the final game of the Legends Classic subregional at Hanner Fieldhouse Sunday (November 29) afternoon. An intense last two minutes saw six ties and seven lead changes, but a Willie Powers III (Gainesville, Fla.) jumper with two seconds left gave the Eagles a one-point lead 78-77, with Johntavious Rucker adding two free throws for insurance.

Powers, named the MVP of the tournament, had 16 points and seven rebounds versus the Trojans. Sophomore guard Ben Drayton III (St. Mary's, Ga.) scored 13 of his 21 points in the second period and added three assists and two steals to his stat line.

Down by two at the half, 30-32, Georgia Southern started the second period with an 8-2 run to take a 38-36 lead. The Eagles built up a 10-point lead by the 7:27 mark, 63-53, but a layup by Antywan Jones and three pointers by Richard Delk and Trayce Macon brought the lead down to 63-31, Eagles, with 4:38 left to play. Two free throws and a layup by Johnson put the lead at six, 67-61, but Macon hit two free throws and Brandon Hazzard hit a trey off a Georgia Southern turnover for five points in only three seconds. Powers hit a jumper at 2:23 for a 69-66 Eagle lead, but Hazzard came right back with a three-pointer at the elbow to tie the score at 69-all at the 2:14 mark. It was the last field goal the Trojans would make.

Troy took a brief one-point lead off free throws by Delk, countered by a three-point play off a Spencer layup for a one-point Eagle margin. Macon hit two from the charity stripe to push the Trojans ahead, 73-72, until a persistent Drayton rebounded his own missed shot and hit a jumper with 1:16 remaining in the game, 74-73, Georgia Southern. Troy's Vernon Taylor hit two more free throws countered by two by Powers. Delk, back at the line, gave the Trojans their last lead 77-76 before Powers hit the game-winning jumper. With 1.4 seconds remaining, Troy had a play set, but Delk threw the Troy inbounds pass into the stands. Rucker hit two free throws to seal the victory.

"The benefits of our difficult schedule are beginning to show," said Eagles head coach Charlton "C.Y." Young. "Last night, we had to grind it out against Arkansas-Fort Smith and because of that, today, everyone in our huddle believed we could win. Ben Drayton and Antonio Hanson really came through for us, Antonio hit a wall, but fought through it and I'm really proud of Ben, he's a big key to our success."

Senior guard Antonio Hanson (Ft. Worth, Texas) extended his consecutive double-figures games to six with 14 points off three three-point field goals plus three assists and two steals. Senior guard Antoine Johnson (Atlanta, Ga.) added 10 points. Rory Spencer (Atlanta, Ga.) tied Powers for the team lead in rebounds with seven and went 5-5 from the free throw line for nine total points.

In the early game, Valparaiso shot 64.3 percent in the second half (18-28) and 57.4 percent for the game in its 86-74 win over Arkansas-Fort Smith. Cory Johnson led all scorers with 26 points, scoring 17 in the second period. Johnson made seven straight field goals after an early miss in the half. He was also the game-high rebounder with nine.

Arkansas-Fort Smith stunned Valparaiso early with a seven-point lead, but the Crusaders regained their composure and tied the game at 16 all. A 14-3 Valparaiso run over the next four minutes put the Crusaders ahead by 11 at 7:41 in the first half. The Lions turned in a run of their own, 8-0, to get within one 29-30, but Valparaiso took advantage of six points from its bench to preserve a lead going into the half, 43-38.

Valparaiso led by as many as 19 in the second half, though Arkansas-Fort Smith put together a 9-0 run off three Josh Simmons' treys to cut it to 12, 79-67. Brandon McPherson (18) and Howard Little (10) had 28 combined points off the bench and Brandon Wood had 12 in the win. For the Lions, Aaron McHenry had 23 points with Grant Clark going 4-4 from the field and 3-3 from behind the arc for 12 points. Chris Williams scored 10 points, 8 coming in the second half.

Powers, who averaged 20.3 points in the three games at Hanner Fieldhouse, was selected MVP of the tournament with Hanson also making the all-tournament team for Georgia Southern. Hanson had a 17.3 points-per-game average over the three games this weekend. Josh Simmons (Arkansas-Fort Smith) and Brandon Hazzard (Troy) and Brandon Wood (Valparaiso) completed the all-tournament picks.

Georgia Southern hits the road for seven of its next eight games, playing at College of Charleston Thursday, December 3 in a 7 p.m. game at the Carolina First Arena.

