

Oguine scores career-high 29, Montana stuns Pitt 83-78

By WILL GRAVES

PITTSBURGH (AP) — The sense of déjà vu for Montana coach Travis DeCuire was unmistakable. On the road. Against a Power Five conference school. His team leading late.

The Grizzlies have been here before. Many times actually. And when guard Michael Oguine's potential game-winning jumper at the end of regulation rolled out and Pittsburgh chased down the rebound to force overtime, DeCuire wondered if another shot at a signature victory was slipping away.

"Yeah, it was 'Here we go again,'" DeCuire said. "But (the message) was 'Let's make it happen. Let's go find a way to win the game.'"

And they did.

Ahmaad Rorie scored six of his 17 points in the extra period, Oguine finished with a career-high 29 and the Grizzlies ended a 14-game losing streak to a Power Five conference team with an 83-78 victory in the Progressive legends Classic.

"The guys grew up tonight," DeCuire said.

Montana last beat a Power Five school when it knocked off Oregon State in 2010. A series of near misses followed, including competitive losses to N.C. State, Southern California and Mississippi last season.

This time, the Grizzlies found a way. Montana's trap forced Pitt into 19 turnovers the Grizzlies converted into 30 points on the other end of the floor and Oguine and Rorie got to the rim repeatedly while beating Pitt defenders off the dribble.

"I feel like maybe they weren't expecting me to drive as much as I was," Oguine said. "They had their guard down, I tried to take a couple of dribbles and get them off balance."

Shamuel Stevenson led Pitt (0-2) with 19 points. Ryan Luther finished with 18 points and 11 rebounds but missed a corner jumper with 27 seconds to play that could have given the Panthers the lead.

Pitt coach Kevin Stallings guessed the Panthers have run that same inbound play that sprung Luther free three times in practice. All three times Luther, one of just two returning players, knocked down the shot. This time it clanged off the rim. Rorie made two free throws to put Montana up 81-78 and after Pitt's Parker Stewart, one of the 11 new faces on a totally remodeled roster, missed a 3-pointer, the Grizzlies began celebrating.

This wasn't a last-second stunner. Montana led for nearly 24 minutes in regulation and never trailed in the extra period. The smaller Grizzlies held their own in close, outrebounding the Panthers 39-38 and outscoring them in the paint 42-40. "It's a good feeling but there at the same time, that's not our goal," DeCuire said. "We want to win these games. We want to win these games in November so we can win these games in March."

ROUGH START

The Panthers are trying to find their way as Stallings tries to figure out what works and what doesn't in his second season since replacing Jamie Dixon. He anticipated growing pains, but maybe not the program's first 0-2 start in 21 years. Pitt dropped its first season opener since 1996 when it fell at Navy on Friday, a game that included a 10-minute stretch in the second half where the Panthers missed 13 straight shots.

Three days later in front of the smallest regular season crowd in the history of the Petersen Events Center (3,102), the problem this time wasn't necessarily bad shooting but bad decisions.

Pitt appeared to be ready to finally take control in the second half building a small 60-57 lead with less than 7 minutes to go. Two Montana steals led to two dunks and all of sudden the Grizzlies were right back in front and never faded. "It felt like we were fighting it all night," Stallings said.

The Panthers actually started 0-3 in 1996-97 but finished 18-15, including a 10-8 mark in the Big East Conference. Getting to that level this season in the Atlantic Coast Conference will be daunting.

"It's going to take patience," Stallings said. "I could have told you that last year. We have had to start over, so that's a little bit of what we are dealing with."

BIG PICTURE

Montana: Oguine and Rorie could be a problem for opposing backcourts in the Big Sky Conference.

Pitt: There will be few easy nights for the Panthers, even when playing the weaker portion of its non-conference schedule.