

Second Half Surge Leads Rams Past Boston Into CBI Championship, 88-75

Couldn't load plugin.

[box score](#)

RICHMOND, Va. – Halftime for youth basketball games are usually used for handing out orange slices, granola bars and Gatorades. In college game, it could be the head coach telling his players 'very loudly' about what needs to be fixed or a quiet bit of encouragement.

Whatever Head Coach Shaka Smart of the Virginia Commonwealth University men's basketball team did or said at halftime sure worked on Wednesday night in the 2010 College Basketball Invitational Semi-Final. The Rams (25-9) blitzed the Terriers of Boston University (21-14) with 46 second-half points to run to a 88-75 victory and a berth in the CBI Championship next week.

"Another fun game tonight and I'm proud of the way our guys stayed tough and made the necessary adjustments at halftime," Smart said. "I thought that second half was the probably the closest, in terms of how we want to play, that we've been all year."

Couldn't load plugin.

Boston became the eighth 20-plus win team that the Black & Gold have beaten in 2009-10, setting a new school record.

Leading the explosive VCU offense was sophomore Bradford Burgess (Midlothian, Va.) with 20 points on 6-of-12 shooting, while junior Joey Rodriguez (Oviedo, Fla.) tallied 19 points and five assists. Big man Larry Sanders (Fort Pierce, Fla.) finished with 18 points, eight rebounds and three blocks on the evening.

It was a well-known fact that the Terriers could shoot the three and in the first stanza they showed it, knocking down seven and forcing a back-and-forth offensive shootout that saw four ties and six lead changes.

An old-fashioned three-point play by John Holland gave BU its biggest lead of the first half at five, but freshman Troy Daniels (Roanoke, Va.) quickly changed that with back-to-back three-pointers to give VCU a 21-20 lead with under 12 minutes before halftime. Neither team would lead by more than three the rest of the half.

The Terriers took a 43-42 lead into halftime when Holland drilled a three-pointer from the corner with six seconds remaining.

VCU jumped all over Boston coming out of the break with a 9-0 run capped off by a three-pointer from junior Ed Nixon (St. Petersburg, Fla.). The Black & Gold locked down on defensive as well, holding a potent Boston offense without a point for the first five minutes of the second half.

"I really thought that spark came from the defensive end," Sanders commented. "When we can get stops and get out and run, that's when we are at the top of our game. We just have to be able to commit on the defensive end for 40 minutes, not just 20."

The Rams lead would remain in double-digits for much of the second half thanks in large part to six second-half three-pointers and 14 points from Rodriguez.

VCU wore down the Terrier offense, forcing 17 turnovers on the game and holding them to just 1-of-6 from long range in the final 20 minutes.

Rodriguez's five assists on the night gave him 200 on the season, tying

him for 10th place on the single-season CAA list and putting him third on the VCU single-season list, behind some guy named Maynor (VCU great Eric Maynor, the school's all-time leader in points and assists).

Nixon (right) was the fourth Ram in double-figures with 10 points, seven rebounds and four steals. The rebounds and steals are both career-highs for the third-year standout.

Jake O'Brien led the Boston attack with 20 points and eight rebounds, while John Holland and Tyler Morris each finished with 16 points apiece.

By the time the Black & Gold tip-off in the first game of the three-game series on Monday, it will be one of just 12 teams left playing NCAA Division I Men's Basketball. That is just under 3.5% of the teams.

The Rams will now have to wait to see who their opponent will be in the CBI Championship between the winner of Princeton and St.Louis. Dates and times for the series will be announced early Thursday morning.