

Louisville tops Memphis in Gotham Classic

By Denis P. Gorman

NEW YORK (AP) — David Padgett is not naive.

Louisville's interim men's basketball coach is fully cognizant that the immediate future of the Atlantic Coast Conference power is an unknown as the university's leaders decide upon who will lead the program following the ugly end of Rick Pitino's tenure at the school. Yet there is a season that must be played out.

And so he is navigating a delicate balancing act: Trying to plan for tomorrow while recognizing the importance of today.

"I don't think you're going to get a kid in the country to commit per se to Louisville until they know who the head coach is going to be moving forward," Padgett said after Louisville's 81-72 win over Memphis in the showcase game of the Houzz Gotham Classic presented by TicketIQ on Saturday at Madison Square Garden. "But like I said before, that's not my concern, that's not our players' concern, that's not our staff's concern. We really are just trying to focus on winning right now."

Louisville improved to 8-2 with its fourth straight win. Quentin Snider led four players in double-figure scoring with 19 points. V.J. King finished with 17 points, Deng Adel 15 and Ray Spalding 12.

"We knew (it would take) just one game (and) everyone was going to at least hit a 3 or something," Snider said. "We were going to catch hot."

Whereas the Cardinals were hot from the field, Memphis left Madison Square Garden angry at itself after its four game-winning streak came to an end. The Tigers fell to 7-3 overall, and 36-54 all-time against Louisville. Jeremiah Martin tied a career high with 26 points, and Kyvon Davenport had 12.

"We have a chip on our (shoulders)," Martin said. "People (are) always saying we're not good enough, and they have 11 new guys; they're not going to be anything."

Tied 38-all at halftime, Louisville outscored Memphis 17-4 in the first 5:30 of the second half to take a 55-42 lead. The key to the spurt was 3-point shooting with Adel knocking down two from behind the arc and Snider one.

"(Adel) ... can shoot over people," Memphis coach Tubby Smith said. "You have to play him for the drive. We didn't make him put it on the floor like we said we should have, like we were going to do; the adjustment we had to make at halftime. That was really disappointing."

Defense aided the Cardinals' cause. Louisville entered the game second nationally in blocked shots (7.9), ninth in field goals allowed (.367), 36th in 3-point field goals allowed (.293) and 44th in points allowed (64.3) per game. Louisville forced 12 turnovers and blocked 14 shots, while limiting the Tigers to 4-of-11 shooting from 3.

"We responded in the second half," Padgett said. "Came out with more of a defensive mindset. ... Came out of the gate in the second half, took the lead and did a good job of maintaining it even when they would go on a couple of runs. (I am) really proud of our team."

As well as Louisville as played, though, the Tigers fought back, using a 13-5 spurt spanning 4:53 to cut a 58-46 deficit to 63-59. Martin scored seven of his 26 in that run.

"I'm not happy about the way I played," Martin said. "Because we didn't win."

Memphis didn't get closer as Louisville responded with a 9-0 run of its own to extend its lead to 72-59.

"The thing I was pleased with — and I kept telling them in the timeouts — every time they went on a run we needed to respond with a run of our own and we seemed to do that," Padgett said.

BIG PICTURE

Louisville: The Cardinals entered Saturday's game ranked 11th in the 15-team ACC in 3-point percentage with a .342 success rate. Naturally, the Cardinals connected on 53.8 percent (14 of 26) of their attempts from behind the arc.

Memphis: The Tigers' modus operandi is pretty simple: Attack the paint. The Tigers did so routinely in the loss. Thirty-four of Memphis' 72 points came in the paint. Moreover, the Tigers had a 14-6 advantage in second-chance points.

NOTABLE

Louisville: Saturday's matinee marked the Cardinals' second road game of the season. Louisville only other game away from home was the 66-57 loss to Purdue on Nov. 28.

Memphis: The Tigers fell to 16-23 all-time in games contested in New York City.