

Vanderbilt rebounds, defeats Bucknell

[box score](#)

NASHVILLE, Tenn. - The Vanderbilt Commodores cost themselves enough, losing on their home court once already this season. They refused to drop another this early.

Jeffery Taylor scored 14 points and led five players in double digits to help No. 18 Vanderbilt beat Bucknell 80-68 Tuesday night with two starters out due to injuries.

The Commodores (2-1) bounced back after losing to Cleveland State to drop from No. 7. John Jenkins, the Southeastern Conference's leading scorer last season, hurt his right ankle in the loss when he stepped on a player's foot in the first half, while senior center Festus Ezeli is out with a sprained knee until at least December.

"It was a huge game for us after the performance against Cleveland State," Taylor said. "We were all real disappointed, kind of ashamed of it. So we put an emphasis on this game to just play hard and kind of let everything else take care of itself. We feel we're talented enough offensively that if we play hard, then we'll take care of most games. Just go out and compete every night."

Brad Tinsley, Lance Goulbourne and Kedren Johnson each added 12 points. Rod Odom had 10.

Vanderbilt plays N.C. State on Saturday in East Rutherford, N.J., in the semifinals of the Legends Classic.

Joe Willman led Bucknell (0-2) with 17 points. Joshea Singleton had 12 and Mike Muscala and Brian Fitzpatrick 10 apiece.

Bucknell coach Dave Paulsen said he thought the Commodores rallied emotionally around not having Jenkins, a move he didn't learn about until his assistants saw the junior guard in street clothes before the game.

"You've got to give a lot of credit to Vandy," Paulsen said. ""I think they really bounced back really, really well after their game with Cleveland State and really got a boost, which probably helps them once Jenkins is back ... They were more physical than we were, and they outtoughed us, and I think that was cumulative. And they really went on their run, we couldn't stop them."

This was the first game between the Patriot League team and Vanderbilt, but Bucknell had beaten the last two SEC teams it played, including Arkansas in the 2006 NCAA tournament. The Bison also won the Patriot League last season with the conference's player of the year in Muscala, and they stayed in this game early by getting to the free throw line.

The Bison went 16 of 20 there compared to Vandy's 8 of 15. But the Commodores outrebounded Bucknell 39-32 and got plenty of help with 35 points from their bench players.

"We had guys come off the bench and play well," Vanderbilt coach Kevin Stallings said. "Kedren really gave us a boost. Our bench played well tonight. We have struggled with good play from the bench in the first couple games. Tonight our bench played well, and I was really happy for them."

The Commodores opened the game still struggling to shoot just as they did in losing to Cleveland State. They missed five straight shots early, and Taylor picked up his second foul with 6:59 left. He went to the bench and stayed there the rest of the first half.

Stallings credited Taylor with holding Bucknell junior Bryson Johnson to four points and 0-3 from 3-point range. Johnson hit a school-record 99 3s last season and ranked seventh nationally shooting 45 percent beyond the arc.

"I really thought the key to the game was the fact that Jeff Taylor was fantastic on Bryson Johnson," Stallings said. "He is a prolific shooter and Jeff was able to limit him to three attempts. Dai-Jon (Parker) had him a little while too but it was mainly Jeff and I thought that was a big, big key for us."

The Commodores also took better care of the ball. They had just five turnovers after 21 against Cleveland State. Johnson said it was a big emphasis in practice Monday.

"And coach just really tried to stress to us to take care of the ball. That's the most important thing," Johnson said.

Bucknell kept it tight in the first half and last led 22-21 after Steven Kaspar hit a layup with 3:34 left.

Josh Henderson, a redshirt freshman helping fill in with Ezeli out, hit a short jumper that put Vandy ahead to stay with 2:46 left. Tinsley hit a jumper, then Parker finished a fast-break with a layup for a 27-26 halftime lead. Vanderbilt kept building the lead

from there, going up by as much as 76-55 on a 3-pointer by Parker with 2:30 left.

The Commodores found their touch in the second half and opened with a 12-2 run to take control. Johnson's 3-pointer made it 47-34 with 14:02 remaining. Vanderbilt, which went 2-of-15 from 3-point range in the first half, hit five of its first 8 beyond the arc in the second half. The Commodores kept pushing the lead out to as much as 76-55 on a 3-pointer by Parker with 2:30 left.

After hitting 2 of 15 from 3-point range in the first half, Vandy hit 8 of 15 in the second.