

Second-Half Run, Defense Leads Tribe to 57-52 Victory over Mercer

[box score](#)

Williamsburg, Va. – The William and Mary men's basketball team used a 15-2 run late in the second half and turned in another stout defensive effort to defeat Mercer, 57-52, in the Legend's Classic Williamsburg Subregional on Saturday night at Kaplan Arena. W&M (2-3) trailed 33-29 midway through the second half, but scored 15 of the game's next 17 points to take a lead it would not relinquish. The Tribe limited the Bears (2-4) to just 33.9 percent shooting for the game to pull out its second victory of the weekend.

Senior forward Marcus Kitts led a quartet of Tribe players in double figures with a career-high 20 points on 8-of-12 shooting from the floor to go along with eight rebounds. Junior Quinn McDowell just missed his second straight double-double with 14 points and nine rebounds, while fellow classmate JohnMark Ludwick added 11 points on 3-of-4 from 3-point range off the bench. Sophomore guard Matt Rum turned in an all-around solid performance with a career-best 10 points, including a pair of clutch 3-pointers during the decisive run, to go along with a career-high six rebounds and a team-best four assists.

The Tribe started slow and Mercer took advantage, scoring the first seven points of the game as a 3-pointer from Justin Cecil gave the Bears a 7-0 cushion four minutes into the contest. The Tribe pulled even at seven on a 3-pointer from Ludwick, before back-to-back triples from Mercer's Jeff Smith put the Bears on top, 13-7, at the 13:14 mark.

The Green and Gold took its first lead of the game at 15-14 as Rum dumped a pass to Kitts for a lay-up at the 5:27 mark. The bucket was part of a 15-1 Tribe run that turned a six-point deficit into an eight-point lead. Ludwick hit a pair of 3-pointers on a spurt, while Kitts scored six points, including a lay-up with three minutes remaining in the half to give the College a 22-14 lead. After a conventional 3-point play from Smith cut the Tribe lead to 22-17 with just under a minute to go, McDowell found Kitts for a lay-up. The basket sent the Green and Gold to the locker room with a 24-17 lead.

Out of the break, Mercer scored the first eight points and took the lead, 25-24, on a conventional 3-point play from Brian Mills at the 14:29 mark. A McDowell lay-up three minutes later put the Tribe back on top at 29-27, but Smith's back-to-back 3-pointers once again swayed the lead back to the Bears. His fourth trey of the game midway through the second half gave Mercer a 33-29 lead.

The Tribe responded as the defense sparked a decisive 15-2 run. Over the next five minutes, the Green and Gold held Mercer without a field goal (in nine chances). W&M pulled even on a Kitts lay-up before a pair of free throws from Ludwick put the Tribe on top for good. Rum hit a pair of 3-pointers during the run and his free throw at the 4:03 mark capped the spurt, giving the College its largest lead of the night at 44-35.

W&M maintained its advantage at 49-41 on a pair of free throws from Kitts with just over a minute remaining. Despite hitting 3-of-4 free throws over the next 30 seconds, the Tribe lead dwindled to just three points, 52-49, following a 3-pointer from Mark Hall with 32 seconds remaining.

Mercer's full court press forced a W&M turnover on the ensuing possession. Cecil had a chance to tie the game for Mercer with a 3-pointer from the left wing, but it hit off the side of the backboard. McDowell pulled down the rebound and hit 5-of-6 from the charity stripe over the final 20 seconds to preserve the Tribe victory.

Smith led all scorers with 23 points, including a 6-of-9 showing from 3-point range, for Mercer. Brian Mills added 13 points in the loss to go along with a team-best six rebounds and three blocked shots.

For the game, W&M only shot 38.1 percent (16-of-42) from the floor, but was strong from 3-point range, hitting on 38.9 percent (7-of-18) and the free throw line, connecting on 72 percent (18-of-25). While the Bears only shot 33.9 percent from the floor, they countered that with an 11-of-30 (36.7 percent) effort from 3-point range. W&M also held a 37-31 on the glass, out-rebounding its second straight opponent.

Gardner-Webb (4-3) downed Western Carolina, 71-65, in the third game of the Legend's Classic Williamsburg Subregional to open Saturday. Jon Moore and Laron Buggs led a balanced Runnin' Bulldogs' attack with 12 points apiece. Mike Williams led all scorers with 24 points, including a 4-of-6 effort from 3-point range, for the Catamounts (2-4).

The final day of the Legend's Classic Williamsburg Subregional will tip off with Gardner-Webb against Mercer at 2 p.m. The Tribe will follow hosting Western Carolina at 4:30 p.m. Live stats will be available for both games at [TribeAthletics.com](#). W&M fans can follow the action over the Tribe Radio Network with Jay Colley, Bill McDonald and Charlie Woollum on the call. The Tide 92.3 FM in Williamsburg is the flagship station of the Tribe Radio Network. The video feed for the W&M-WCU game can also be purchased at [TribeAthletics.com](#) for \$7.95.

