

Alabama Upsets Oklahoma in Top 10 Battle

Mo Williams leads No. 8 Crimson Tide with 25 points

[box score](#)

NEW YORK (AP) -- A veteran Top Ten team had to lose Thursday night, and No. 8 Alabama had enough Mo Williams to make sure it wasn't the one on the short end of the score.

Oklahoma's Ebi Ere drives to the basket against Alabama.

Williams scored 25 and the Crimson Tide beat No. 3 Oklahoma 68-62 in the AT&T Wireless Coaches vs. Cancer Classic at Madison Square Garden.

Both schools had four starters back from teams that won their conference tournaments last season, and Oklahoma was coming off an appearance in the Final Four. It looked like the season opener for both -- especially Oklahoma, which didn't get its offense going until the game's final two minutes.

"This was two good teams, a good way to start out the year," Alabama coach Mark Gottfried said. "I didn't think we finished as well as we could have. You've got to learn. That's what early games are for."

Oklahoma coach Kelvin Sampson was a little more direct in assessing his team's first game since losing in the national semifinals last season at the Georgia Dome.

"I was a little concerned something like this would happen, so I'm not totally surprised by it," he said. "Since we got back from Atlanta, this group of kids has had everybody tell them how great they were and pat them on the back.

"But that first 35 minutes, there was no toughness and playing hard that we have had at Oklahoma for the last eight years. I was ashamed of the way we played."

Kenny Walker added 14 points for Alabama and preseason All-America Erwin Dudley had 12 points and eight rebounds. But it was Williams, a sophomore guard, who came up big when the Sooners made their late run.

"Coach had a great game plan, and we knew we were facing a good team tonight and didn't back down from the challenge," Williams said.

Ebi Ere had 24 points for Oklahoma, while Hollis Price had all but four of his 19 in the second half.

The Crimson Tide opened the second half with a 10-0 run that gave them a 43-25 lead with 15:24 left in the game. Oklahoma went 5:24 without scoring to start the half, missing six shots and committing three turnovers as they fell behind by 18 points.

"Obviously I did a hell of a job with my halftime speech," Sampson said. "We came out as bad as a team can play."

Price finally started to shoot -- he was 1-for-2 in the first half -- and the Sooners were able to chip away, getting to 60-55 with 1:30 left on a steal and layup by Jabahri Brown.

Williams then made two free throws to restore the seven-point lead, and he answered the next two times Oklahoma scored as well, never letting the Sooners closer than five points.

"Great players' tickers inside are different than others, and Mo is one of them," Gottfried said.

Neither team looked smooth in the first half, but Alabama's defense allowed it to take a 33-25 lead after 20 minutes. Price was never able to get it going on offense, and Ere picked up the slack with 12 first-half points.

"I was nonaggressive in the first half," Price said. "I only had nine shots for the game, and to be one of the best players, I have to take more than that."

This was Alabama's first victory against Oklahoma in four meetings. And it might've provided just a little measure of revenge for Crimson Tide fans: On Sept. 7, in a rare matchup of their football teams, then-No. 2 Oklahoma rallied in the fourth quarter to beat Alabama 37-27.

Memphis beat Syracuse 70-63 in the opening game of the two-day, eight-team event sponsored by AT&T Wireless.