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Christmas Leads 'Cuse To Victory

A career night from Rakeem Christmas gives Syracuse the edge it needed to defeat Hampton, 65-47

[box score](#)

A career night from Rakeem Christmas and another double-figure scoring effort from Chris McCullough leads Syracuse to its second victory of the 2014 season.

The Orange (2-0) defeated the Hampton Owls (0-2), 65-47 in its second game of the 2K Classic Benefitting The Wounded Warrior Project.

Christmas Is 'Cuse's Catalyst

Christmas led Syracuse on both ends of the court, finishing with 15 points and 16 rebounds for his first double-double of the season. The senior forwards offensive output was fueled by a 5-of-10 night from the floor and a 5-of-7 performance from the free throw line.

The last time a Syracuse player recorded 15 or more rebounds was Baye Moussa Keita, who corralled 15 against Canisius back on November 14, 2010. His 16 boards is a career best and follows up a career-best scoring performance in the season opener Friday night in which he finished with 21 points against Kennesaw State.

Along with the Christmas' performance, Syracuse gained an edge by taking advantage of Hampton's mishaps. The Owls committed just five more turnovers than the Orange, however, Syracuse was able to convert the 15 turnovers into 16 points while Hampton was only able to muster three points off of 10 'Cuse miscues.

Syracuse also made the most of its free passes, netting 16-of-23 free throws and limited Hampton's trips to the charity stripe as the Owls managed just three points on eight attempts.

Leading Christmas' supporting cast was McCullough who netted 13 points in the game. Despite foul trouble, McCullough continued to play physical, contributing four rebounds and three blocks as well. Michael Gbinije fell a point shy of double-digits, picking up nine points with a few clutch plays down the stretch. B.J. Johnson and Trevor Cooney each finished with eight points and five rebounds.

Trading Blows In The First

Hampton refused to go away in the opening half as it only trailed by one with 7:30 left until the break. The Orange, unwilling to give up the lead, responded with five-point burst to give itself some distance and pace the Owls, 27-21.

The Syracuse defense didn't allow the Owls to string together a run of its own the rest of the half, as 'Cuse went on to extend its lead to 35-27 at the intermission.

Christmas, McCullough and Johnson picked up where they left off following their victory against Kennesaw State as the three powered Syracuse's offense, knocking down 25-of-35 first half points.

Christmas fell a rebound shy of a double-double in the first stanza, recording 10 points and nine rebounds. Johnson finished with eight points while McCullough tallied seven at the break.

Cooney Sparks Syracuse Down The Stretch

With 8:53 left to play and Hampton still lingering, the Owls pulled within five of Syracuse, bringing Orange Nation to its feet, looking for a spark to propel Syracuse down the stretch.

With Syracuse's lead threatened and Hampton gaining confidence, Cooney was the one to deliver, knocking down a three that sparked a 17-7 run that included a three-point play from Tyler Roberson and two from Gbinije.

The stretch stunned Hampton for the final 7:22 of play, leading to the 65-47 victory, advancing Syracuse to a 2-0 record going into Friday's matchup with Cal in Madison Square Garden at 9:00 PM.