

## **Florida Advances with 72-64 Win Over Temple**

### **Hamilton looks sharp with 17 points in IKON Classic opener**

[box score](#)

NEW YORK (AP) -- The opening night of the 2001-02 college basketball season meant more to Justin Hamilton than most other players and it showed.

The 6-foot-3 guard, who missed more than half of last season with a knee injury, scored 17 points to lead Florida (No. 5 ESPN/USA Today, No. 6 AP) to a 72-64 victory over Temple (No. 17 ESPN/USA Today, No. 16 AP) on Thursday night in the opening round of the Coaches vs. Cancer Classic.

"I've been looking forward to this game since I got injured," Hamilton said. "Once the game's taken away from you, you start to get a greater appreciation for it. There was no apprehension at all, not with all the hard work I put in. I never gave the knee a second thought."

The Gators' victory at Madison Square Garden moved them on to Friday night's championship game against the winner of the game between Arizona and No. 2 Maryland.

Florida ended last season in the second round of the NCAA tournament with a 75-54 loss to Temple, its biggest defeat and worst offensive game of the season. The Gators started 2001-02 the same way, missing their first seven shots from the field before finally finding the mark.

Hamilton hit a 3-pointer 3:43 into the game to stop the shooting drought and bring Florida within 6-3.

"I thought over the first four minutes we were a little anxious, a little excited and took some quick shots," Florida coach Billy Donovan said.

The Gators went 14-for-24 the rest of the half against Temple's matchup zone and used their fullcourt pressure to up the tempo and take a 39-33 lead.

Hamilton, who played just 14 games last season before having his season ended by major surgery, scored 15 points in the opening half, going 6-for-10 from the field.

"Justin has had great, great focus," Donovan said. "The injury really put things in perspective for him. He realized it's a blessing to be out there."

Brett Nelson, who averaged 15.3 points per game last season and shot 45 percent from 3-point range, missed his first seven shots, including five 3s. His first field goal was a 3 with 12:13 to play that gave Florida a 54-42 lead. He made his next 3-pointer 2 1-2 minutes later to make it 58-46. His jumper with 5:49 left gave the Gators a 65-52 lead, matching their biggest of the game.

Temple got as close as 70-64 on a 3-pointer by Lynn Greer with 25 seconds left.

Freshman David Lee had 15 points for Florida, while Udonis Haslem had 14 points and 16 rebounds. Nelson had 10 points.

"They are certainly better with the players they have now than they were with the players they had last year," Temple coach John Chaney said. "Certainly we're weaker and their press worked a lot better because we don't have a complementary guard for Lynn. We have players who could be but they will have to learn."

Temple finished with 15 turnovers.

"Fifteen turnovers for Temple is like 25 for any other team because of the way they take care of the ball," Donovan said. "We made some adjustments with press early and I thought we did a good job of rotating and denying Greer the ball."

Greer led Temple with 15 points on 4-for-19 shooting and Kevin Lyde had 12 points and 10 rebounds.

"Our turnovers began to add up when they found out we couldn't handle the ball," said Chaney who was coaching his first game as a Hall of Famer. "They had two guys chase Greer all game, so obviously he is a great player if they did that."

Nelson, who finished 3-for-16 from the field, including 2-for-10 on 3s, set a school record by hitting a 3-pointer in his 30th consecutive game, breaking the mark he shared with Craig Brown, who played from 1991-94.