

# Lehigh posts impressive 90-80 win over Liberty

[box score](#)

**LYNCHBURG, Va.** - Junior C.J. McCollum scored an efficient 32 points while senior Jordan Hamilton added a career-high 23 to spearhead a strong Mountain Hawks' effort as Lehigh went on to defeat Liberty, 90-80, on Saturday evening at the Vines Center. McCollum's point total came on 10-of-16 shooting and a perfect 9-of-9 from the free throw line as he eclipsed 30 points for the ninth time in his career.

"It was nice that we came out with that fire and energy," said Lehigh "I thought we were very efficient, getting good quality shots early in the lead. It was nice to get some good contributions from some secondary players that aren't our normal leading scorers. Ultimately, having 18 assists on all our field goals was pretty quality play."

The win gives Lehigh its third straight victory, matching the Mountain Hawks' longest win streak from all of last season. Lehigh looks to make it four on Sunday when it plays Eastern Kentucky at 2:30 p.m.

Hamilton shattered his career high with 23 points on 8-of-10 shooting, including 2-of-3 from three-point range. Sophomore Mackey McKnight and junior Gabe Knutson each finished with 10 points as well. Lehigh reached 90 points for the first time this season after eclipsing 90 on three occasions last year.

The win came over a strong Liberty squad, who finished second in the Big South last season while posting 19 wins. Lehigh jumped out to the early lead, and Liberty staged numerous runs, but the Mountain Hawks continued to respond. The Flames pulled to within three midway through the second half, the closest they had been since it was 5-2 just 2:43 into the game. However, Lehigh outscored them by seven the rest of the way to pull away for the victory.

"[Liberty] is a team that has been accustomed to winning," said Reed. "They're a talented team. They did make a run. They were really shooting the ball fairly well when it was all said and done."

With the score tied at two, Lehigh went on a 7-0 run, which began with a three-point play from Hamilton. After a Knutson basket, a pull-up jumper from McCollum made it 9-2, forcing Liberty to call timeout with 16:59 still remaining in the first.

John Caleb Sanders ended the run with a jumper to make it 9-4, but from there, the Mountain Hawks answered with a 16-3 run behind a pair of three-pointers from both Hamilton and McCollum. McCollum's second trey in a 1:45 span forced the Flames to call their second timeout with 11:52 left in the first and the Mountain Hawks leading, 25-7.

Liberty began to inch closer, thanks to five straight points from David Minaya. The Flames would pull within 33-27 with 4:20 to go following a pair of Jesse Sanders free throws, but Lehigh came right back with eight in a row over the next 1:22, beginning with a McKnight three-pointer and ending with Hamilton's second three-point play of the half, making it 41-27 with 2:58 left in the first.

The Flames came right back, scoring eight of the final 10 first-half points to pull within 43-35 after 20 minutes of play. McKnight hit a pair of free throws with just five seconds remaining to put Lehigh up 10, but Sanders made an aggressive drive to the hoop and finished the layup as time expired.

Lehigh came out of the locker room much like it did in the first, scoring seven of the first nine second-half points as McCollum's third three-pointer of the night gave the Mountain Hawks a 50-37 advantage with 17:27 on the clock.

With the Mountain Hawks up 56-45, Liberty staged another rally, scoring 10 of the next 12 points to pull within 58-55 following the Flames' fourth point in an eight-second span.

Lehigh again responded, eventually regaining a double-digit, 76-66 lead following a jumper from junior Holden Greiner with 5:10 remaining. McCollum then took over with a nifty move to the rim followed by an emphatic dunk. He then hit four straight free throws to put the Mountain Hawks up, 82-72, with 2:52 to go.

The Mountain Hawks opened a 14-point advantage after a Hamilton layup, then regained that lead via two

Greiner free throws with 28 seconds on the clock. Liberty scored five of the game's final six points, including a three-pointer as time expired, good for the 90-80 final.

Lehigh finished at 54 percent (31-of-58) from the floor, 35 percent (6-of-17) from three-point range. Liberty shot 43 percent (28-of-65) and 33 percent (4-of-12) from long range. The Flames held a 36-31 rebounding advantage.

Lehigh wraps up its stay in the 2K Sports Classic Subregionals on Sunday when it plays Eastern Kentucky at 2:30 p.m. in its third game in a 48-hour span. The Mountain Hawks then have eight days off before returning to action in their home opener next Monday (Nov. 28) when they welcome Quinnipiac to Stabler Arena for a 7 p.m. tipoff. Tickets for all home games are now on sale and may be purchased on [Lehighsports.com](http://Lehighsports.com) or by calling the ticket office at (610) 7LU-GAME.