

No. 23 Marquette Opens with Win at MSG

Travis Diener leads Golden Eagles with 18 in sloppy season-opener

[box score](#)

NEW YORK (AP) -- Opening games are seldom works of art. Marquette and St. John's proved that Thursday night in the Coaches vs. Cancer Classic.

Travis Diener scored 18 points to lead No. 23 Marquette over defending NIT-champion St. John's.

Travis Diener scored 18 points and No. 23 Marquette, despite not having a field goal over the final 4:20, beat St. John's 52-45 Thursday night in the Coaches vs. Cancer Classic.

This was a sloppy season opener for two teams looking to replace their stars -- Dwyane Wade at Marquette and Marcus Hatten at St. John's. After one game both spots are still up for grabs.

"We are a work in progress," Marquette coach Tom Crean said. "We have some veterans like Travis and some young guys trying to step up. I am excited with the win. We earned it. We have a ton of things we have to get better at and that's a first game."

Marquette shot 29.6 percent (16-for-54), while the Red Storm were 16-for-51 (31.4 percent). The Golden Eagles had 20 turnovers, two more than St. John's

"Both teams did a good job defensively but one team missed more free throws and layups than the other and that was the difference," Red Storm coach Mike Jarvis said.

Diener was the offensive star of the game -- no one else scored more than 11 points -- and he was 3-for-11 from the field, including missing all five of his 2-point attempts. He was 9-for-10 from the free throw line, however, and that's where Marquette prevailed, going 14-for-16 compared to 11-for-22 for St. John's. Diener, who played all 40 minutes at the point, didn't have a turnover.

"We weren't expecting to shoot that bad but we'll take a win when we can get one," Diener said. "Credit St. John's. We didn't take care of the ball the way we wanted to. We'll get better at that."

Grady Reynolds led St. John's with 11 points, while Kyle Cuffe had 10. The Red Storm were 2-for-12 from 3-point range.

"We didn't quit," Cuffe said. "We made a few mental mistakes and that can be fixed."

Marcus Jackson's tip-in with 4:22 left gave the Golden Eagles a 44-36 lead, but that was their last field goal of the game. Freshman Daryll Hill hit a 3-pointer and then scored on a layup after a steal at midcourt to bring the Red Storm to 46-43 with 2:27 to go. Diener and Steve Novak then made six straight free throws for Marquette to seal the win.

"I'm not worried about us shooting the ball," Crean said. "We'll get there."

Marquette beat Villanova 73-61 in last year's Coaches vs. Cancer Classic and went on to reach the Final Four. The Golden Eagles announced last week that they would leave Conference USA and join St. John's in the Big East. In 2005-06 this will be a conference matchup.

"It means a ton to be in New York and this event. This is a big time event," Crean said. "We know we're going to be playing there every year soon so this does mean a lot."

