

State Cagers Upset #18 Texas A&M To Advance To 2K Sports Classic Final

[box score](#)

NEW YORK - A blistering start carried the Mississippi State men's basketball team to a shocking 69-60 victory over No. 18 Texas A&M in a semifinal game of the 2K Sports Classic played Thursday night at Madison Square Garden.

Playing away from home for the first time this season, MSU (3-1) built an early 22-point lead and held on for the victory. The Bulldogs face No. 16 Arizona at 5:30 p.m. CT today in the championship game of the classic. ESPN2 will have the national telecast.

The Bulldogs hit five of their first six shots and sprinted to a lightning-quick 15-5 lead. The early run included 3s by Arnett Moultrie, Dee Bost and Rodney Hood. MSU's fast start was also sparked on the defensive end with a block by Renardo Sidney and a steal and fast-break layup by Bost.

The Bulldogs continued the torrid start with a 16-4 run to extend the early advantage to 31-9 midway through the opening half. The Bulldogs were well on their way to a 50-percent shooting first half, which included a 5-of-8 showing from 3-point range.

Texas A&M (2-1) battled back with a 16-6 run to trim the deficit to 12 points. A layup by David Loubeau brought A&M within 37-25 with 2:59 left before halftime.

The Aggies kept the defensive pressure up to close the half. However, the Bulldogs overcame a stretch of nine straight misses from the field to post a 41-32 advantage at halftime.

Another fast start propelled the Bulldogs in the game's final half. Back-to-back baskets by Brian Bryant and a 3-point play by Arnett Moultrie capped a 7-2 run and extended the Maroon and White advantage to 48-32 with 17:36 remaining in the game.

MSU kept the defensive intensity up over the final 20 minutes, as well. The Bulldogs managed 12 steals and forced 16 turnovers, while posting their first win over a ranked opponent since a 71-64 home win over No. 24 Florida on Jan. 29, 2011.

Texas A&M closed within eight points twice in the game's final half. After A&M closed within 60-52, the Bulldogs slammed the door shut with a trey by Bost, a defensive rebound by Moultrie and follow-up basket by Hood.

For the contest, the Bulldogs hit 22 of 54 shots from the field (40.7 percent), 6 of 13 shots from 3-point range (46.2 percent) and 19 of 31 shots from the foul line (61.3 percent). The Aggies hit 22 of 54 shots from the field (40.7 percent), 6 of 15 shots from 3-point range (40.0 percent) and 10 of 14 shots from the foul line (71.4 percent).

MSU held a 39-35 rebounding advantage. The Bulldogs had nine assists and 15 turnovers, while the Aggies had nine assists and 16 turnovers.

Bost finished with 20 points, while Bryant added 12 points and Hood added 10 points. Moultrie had a team-high eight rebounds, while Bost had four steals.

Elston Turner paced Texas A&M with 13 points. Loubeau had 11 points, while Jamal Branch had 10 points. Kourtney Roberson had a team-high 10 rebounds.

Arizona (4-0) defeated St. John's 81-72 in Thursday's late semifinal game.

