

Purple Eagles Rally For 86-83 Victory Over New Mexico State

[box score](#)

NIAGARA UNIV., N.Y. – The Niagara men's basketball team pulled out a dramatic 86-83 comeback win over the New Mexico State Aggies on Sunday in the final game of the 2K Sports Classic benefiting Wounded Warrior Project.

Niagara (2-2) used a 54-point second half en route to erasing a 22-point first half deficit to come away with one of the more thrilling victories in the Gallagher Center history.

"That was just a terrific win," head coach Joe Mihalich said. "We had a dud of a first half, no doubt about that, but in the second half he had all those qualities I think that you need to be a great team. I think we really grew up a lot this weekend."

The Purple Eagles struggled in the first half, committing 15 turnovers leading to 26 New Mexico State (1-3) points; NU only committed three turnovers in the entire game against Bucknell on Friday. NU trimmed the margin to 13 points before NMSU's Daniel Mullings connected on a buzzer-beater banked 3-pointer to give the Aggies a 48-32 halftime lead.

The Purple Eagles flipped the script in the second half. NU committed no turnovers in the half while scoring 17 points off of nine Aggie turnovers. NU also outscored the Aggies, who participated in the 2012 NCAA Tournament, 22-12 in the paint after being outscored 28-12 in the first half.

Niagara was downed as much as 19 in the second half before the Purple Eagles staged their rally. Trailing 72-57 with 11:04 left, Antoine Mason drained a jumper to start a 27-6 run over the next nine minutes. The Purple Eagles regained the lead for the first time since scoring the game's opening points during the run. Marvin Jordan stole the ball from Bandja Sy and went the distance to score a layup to give NU an 80-78 lead with 4:12 remaining. A dunk by Scooter Gillette with 2:22 left handed NU its largest lead of the game, 84-78.

The run was halted on the next possession and the Aggies eventually cut the lead to 84-83 with 1:21 remaining. The Purple Eagles missed two layups and a dunk on their next possession, to allow NMSU a chance to take the lead. Mullings, who led the Aggies with 26 points, missed a layup with 11 seconds on the clock. Mason grabbed the rebound, was fouled and followed with two free throws to give NU an 86-83 lead. On the final possession, Sy's missed a potential game-tying 3-pointer in the final seconds.

"We just got finished saying (in the locker room) we just learned how to be a really great team," Mihalich stated. "We're really happy with that win."

Juan'ya Green led the game with a season-high 28 points and had a game-high six assists. Mason followed suit with 19 points, including a game-best 9-for-10 at the charity stripe, and had a team-high seven rebounds. Jordan had 15 points and Gillette had a season-high 10 points.

Green and Mason were both named to the 2K Sports Classic Niagara Subregional All-Tournament team.

Niagara will face Little 3 rival St. Bonaventure on Saturday, Nov. 24 at 4 p.m. in Rochester, N.Y. to begin a five-game road trip.

