

## **No. 5 Pittsburgh Tops UIC, 97-54**

**Ashton Gibbs scored 24 points and recorded 7 assists in victory over UIC**

[box score](#)

**PITTSBURGH, Pa.** – Illinois-Chicago plays in the Horizon League, the same conference as NCAA runnerup Butler. Opening their season at No. 5 Pittsburgh, the Flames found themselves truly out of their league.

Ashton Gibbs scored 24 points, Brad Wanamaker added 17 and No. 5 Pittsburgh opened an 18-point lead midway through the first half while cruising to its second victory in three nights, a 97-54 decision over rebuilding Illinois-Chicago on Wednesday night.

The Panthers (2-0) needed little time to take control in the 2K Sports Classic game against the Flames (0-1), who didn't hire new coach Howard Moore until late August after going 8-22 last season.

"That's a talented, talented team we played," Moore said. "Obviously, we play very good teams in our league. But, let's face it, those bodies we saw out there tonight, that's big-time basketball."

Pitt was guaranteed of advancing to the tournament's semifinals against Maryland on Nov. 18 in New York even before winning its two home games. The Panthers will play either Texas or Illinois the following night.

Pitt started fast, then was even better in the second half while shooting 70 percent (21 of 30).

Wanamaker had a driving layup, two pull-up jumpers and a 3-pointer in the opening seven minutes as Pitt opened leads of 9-2, 14-4 and 22-6.

It was a contrast to Monday, when Pitt trailed by eight points in the first half before coming back to beat Rhode Island 83-75- an unusually tight game for a Top 5 team in its season opener.

This one, as expected, wasn't nearly as close, as Gilbert Brown added 12 points and backup guard Travon Woodall had 10 for the Panthers.

Pitt made it 26-8 on Gibbs' two free throws with 9:37 remaining in the half, allowing coach Jamie Dixon to spread playing time among 10 players as he looks for an effective rotation. Illinois-Chicago, 1-16 on the road the last two seasons, never got closer than 12 points after that.

With Gary McGhee and Dante Taylor getting eight rebounds each, Pitt outrebounded Illinois-Chicago 45-25 and now has a 90-57 advantage through two games.

Wanamaker had nine assists, and Gibbs had seven. Gibbs was 5 of 10 from 3-point range and Wanamaker made his only attempt as Pittsburgh was 11 of 21 from beyond the arc, a significant improvement from its 3 of 16 against Rhode Island.

"I was taking advantage of what the defense was giving me," Gibbs said. "I tried to find open spots and when I did, I knocked down 3s."

Gibbs, coming off a 22-point game against Rhode Island, is averaging 23 points and Wanamaker is averaging 20.5.

"I'm more of a driver and a playmaker and Ashton's a spot-up shooter, but he's been creating his own shots so it makes him more dangerous," Wanamaker said. "When you have two players constantly attacking you, it puts people on their heels."

The Flames, not nearly as quick or as deep as Rhode Island, never did find an answer for the quickness and playmaking skills of Wanamaker and Gibbs, the backcourt that led Pitt to a 25-9 record and the second round of the NCAA tournament last season.

"I really like our perimeter, it's a strength of ours," Dixon said. "They're getting other guys shots and making shots, and that's a good combination. The numbers don't lie."

K.C. Robbins scored 12 points for the Flames. Paul Carter, a 6-foot-8 senior who graduated from Minnesota but is finishing his eligibility at UIC, scored six points on 1-for-10 shooting.

Carter, the son of former NBA player Ron Carter, transferred so he could be closer to his 14-year-old sister, Bria, who is recovering from cancer.

Pitt won its 49th consecutive home game against a non-conference opponent at the Petersen Events Center, where the Panthers are 134-11 over nine seasons.