

St. Bonaventure beats Alcorn State 68-59

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St. Bonaventure was all business on Friday night

box score

AUSTIN, Texas -Defense, improved free throw shooting and 21 points from Zarryon Fereti led the Bonnies to their first win of the year, a 68-59 decision over Alcorn State in the consolation game of the 2K Sports College Hoops Classic on Friday night at the University of Texas' Erwin Center. The Bonnies will bring a 1-1 mark back to campus for Tuesday's home opener.

"It was great to get a victory, especially when we didn't get what we wanted the first night," said Bonnies coach Anthony Solomon. "I thought we came off our disappointing loss and carried on with it."

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Fereti's 21 points headlined four Bonnies in double figures. Michael Lee scored 16 points, A.J. Hawkins had 11 and Paul Williams added 10. Williams collected his second double-double in as many nights with a game-high 10 rebounds.

Neither team led by more than six points in the first half. After trailing 8-2 at the outset, St. Bonaventure found its stride. The Bonnies took their first lead, 9-8, at the 12:26 mark on a three-pointer by Zarryon Fereti and a layin by Jermaine Calvin, and gradually pulled away to lead 31-27 at halftime.

At the beginning of the second half, St. Bonaventure established itself as the better team. Powered by Lee, the Bonnies outscored Alcorn State 13-4 over the first 5:00 to open a 44-31 lead. Lee scored eight of his 16 points in that stretch.

Alcorn State never came any closer than eight points after that. The Bonnies' lead grew as large as 15 at 63-48 with 4:52 left. It certainly could have been a much wider margin except for 21 St. Bonaventure turnovers.

Solomon credited his team's defense to the second half surge. The Bonnies limited the Braves to 39 percent shooting (13-33) in the second half and 38 percent overall.

"We came out and were able to separate ourselves," he said. "At halftime, I just told them to loosen up and just play hard. We did that. We got defensive stops and made our free throws."

The Bonnies certainly benefited from improved free throw shooting as compared to Thursday's loss to Chicago State, when they missed 19 free throws in a three-point loss. Against Alcorn State, the Bonnies made 25 of 36 free throws (69 percent), including 16 of 24 in the second half. Fereti did most of his scoring at the line, going 12-14. Williams, who was one of the team's poorest free throw shooters last season, went 6-8 and was 15-20 at the line over the two games.

Hawkins enjoyed a strong all-around game. He finished with eight

rebounds, three steals, two assists and one blocked shot. Lee tied his career high with five blocks. The Bonnies also received strong showings from Tyler Relph, who scored three points but played a solid second half at point guard; and Ivan Kovacevic, who grabbed three rebounds in nine minutes.

The Bonnies will travel back to campus on Saturday to begin preparing for their home opener, which will be on Tuesday, Nov. 14, against Central Arkansas at 7:00.