

Syracuse Smothers Bethune-Cookman, 68-37

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Orange allow fewest points since 1999 in season-opening win

[box score](#)

SYRACUSE, N.Y. (AP) -- Even though No. 16 Syracuse was sloppy in its season-opener, Bethune-Cookman was no match for the Orange's smothering defense.

Syracuse's Gerry McNamara played a team-high 32 minutes against Bethune-Cookman.

Terrence Roberts had 15 points, Demetris Nichols added 11, and Syracuse beat the Wildcats 68-37 in the first round of the 2K Sports College Hoops Classic benefiting Coaches vs. Canceron Tuesday night. It was the fewest points allowed by Syracuse since an 84-37 victory over South Carolina on Jan. 24, 1998.

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"Defensively, we did a good job, as well as you could expect at this stage of the year," Syracuse coach Jim Boeheim said. "We really helped each other. Our inside guys did a nice job. We really didn't give them too many open looks. We were very good."

Antonio Webb led Bethune-Cookman with 15 points and Mike Williams had 11 on the opening night of Division I basketball.

The Orange will play Cornell, which beat Saint Francis (Pa.) 75-54, in the second round on Wednesday.

Despite 24 turnovers, the Orange used a stifling man-to-man defense to take control early in the first meeting between the schools. Center Darryl Watkins had all four of his blocks in the first half as the Orange contested almost every shot. The Wildcats went just over 10 minutes without a field goal as Syracuse reeled off 11 points.

After a 3-pointer by Webb pulled Bethune-Cookman to 14-10 four minutes into the game, the Wildcats missed 13 shots before Kory Crumbley converted a backdoor layup with 4:47 left.

Bethune-Cookman shot 23.3 percent in the half and 26.8 percent for the game, and the Wildcats seemed to be looking over their shoulders even on what should have been sure shots.

During a 6-0 run in the second half, Ron Mitchell failed to convert his own steal, missing a fast-break layup at 13:54. That came about three minutes after Williams missed a one-handed dunk attempt.

"I would have liked to have seen us make a few more easy opportunities," Bethune-Cookman coach Cliff Reed said. "If we had made some more, I'd be happier. You're not going to get a lot of easy opportunities, and when we got those we didn't capitalize. That was the big thing."

After their brief spurt, the Wildcats went another 6:08 before scoring again. When Webb hit a 3 from right wing with 7:38 left, they trailed 50-29.

"We pressed them," said Roberts, who had six rebounds and two steals. "We knew we were a better defensive team, and they kept their big guys out on top, so we just pressed them and forced a lot of turnovers and bad shots."

Syracuse began the game hitting its first four 3-pointers -- three by Nichols and one by Louie McCroskey. A jumper in the lane by Roberts started the Syracuse surge and a 3 from the top of the key by Gerry McNamara, his first points of the game, ended it at 5:07.

Syracuse led 35-16 at halftime, and it was more of the same after the break. Bethune-Cookman finished with 23 turnovers and was outrebounded 43-31.

"I thought we competed, I thought we played decent on the defensive end," Reed said. "Only when we scrambled did we give up a lot of easy opportunities."

If the Orange displayed a weakness, it was the ballhandling of their big men. The 6-foot-11 Watkins had seven turnovers, most of them in the lane, and the 6-9 Roberts had three.

"Our big guys had 14 turnovers," Boenheim said. "We'll try and get the ball into them for a little while but not much longer."