

Orange Takes Manhattan!

[box score](#)

NEW YORK, N.Y. – No. 24 Syracuse (4-0) won the championship of the 2K Sports Classic benefiting Coaches vs. Cancer with an 87-71 triumph against defending national champion #6/4 North Carolina (4-1) on Friday, Nov. 20 at Madison Square Garden.

Junior Wes Johnson earned 2K Sports Classic MVP honors after tallying 25 points and eight rebounds for the Orange against the Tar Heels. Johnson averaged 21.0 points and 9.5 rebounds in the team's two wins at the Garden. He had 17 points and 11 boards in Thursday's semifinal win against Cal.

Senior Andy Rautins, who had 11 points, seven rebounds, seven assists and seven steals versus North Carolina was named to the all-tournament team. His seven thefts Friday tied several players for fifth on the school's single-game record list.

The Orange used a 22-1 run at the start of the second half to overcome a two-point halftime deficit and hand the Tar Heels their first loss of the season. The victory marked the second straight year Syracuse defeated the reigning NCAA champs to win a season-opening tournament. The Orange knocked off 2008 national champ Kansas to win last year's O'Reilly Auto Parts CBE Classic.

The 2K Sports Classic title marks the fourth time in the last six seasons the Orange has won a season-opening tournament championship.

Trailing at the intermission for the first time all season, the Orange turned a 39-37 deficit into a 16-point victory by outscoring the Tar Heels, 50-32, in the second half. Syracuse tallied 22 of the period's first 23 points and led by as much as 20, 62-42, on a three by sophomore Kris Joseph with 11:44 to play. Freshman Brandon Triche and senior Arinze Onuaku keyed the stretch, scoring six points each during the run. Johnson also had five points in the scoring spurt.

Meanwhile, North Carolina missed its first 13 shots in the second half and didn't tally its first field goal of the period until a basket by Tyler Zeller at the 12:02 mark. Zeller's bucket ended a drought of more than 10 minutes for the Tar Heels without a field goal going back to the first half.

Zeller's basket also prompted a 17-6 North Carolina run that cut the Orange advantage to 68-60 with 7:04 to go. However, the Orange responded by scoring 13 of next 15 points to put the game away.

Johnson's 25 points led all scorers and came on 10-for-17 shooting. He scored 16 of his points in the first half and hit four 3-pointers in the contest.

Overall, the Orange placed five players in double figures as Onuaku (15 points), Triche (11 points) and Joseph (12 points) also reached double digits. Onuaku and Joseph each hauled in seven rebounds.

Friday's title tilt was a game of runs from the outset. The Tar Heels, who hadn't trailed at any point in their first four outings, quickly found themselves in a hole as the Orange raced out to an 8-0 lead before a pair of free throws by Will Graves at the 17:06 mark got the Tar Heels on the scoreboard.

After a trey by Rautins extended the margin to 11-2, North Carolina responded with an 11-0 scoring run to claim its first lead of the game, 13-11, with 15:05 to play in the opening half. Graves and Ed Davis combined for all of the Tar Heels' points in the run, and North Carolina's first 15 points of the contest. But Johnson carried the Orange for the next three minutes. He put on a dazzling scoring display, tallying 11 straight Syracuse points, including a pair of 3-pointers, to spark a 22-20 Orange advantage.

The Syracuse margin swelled to nine again, 31-22, on a Scoop Jardine bucket. However, a 13-2 Tar Heel run, capped by a Marcus Ginyard three, put North Carolina on top 35-33 at the 2:08 mark. A hoop by Davis in the final seconds set the halftime score at 39-37 before the Orange's second-half blitzkrieg.

Overall, Syracuse was 37-of-68 (54.4 pct.) from the floor and knocked down of nine of its 21 (42.9 pct.) 3-point attempts, including its first five triple tries of the game. Syracuse made 11 of its first 15 shots to start the second half.

North Carolina shot 38.1 percent from the field (24-63) was just 4-for-16 (25.0 pct.) from behind the 3-point arc. Davis paced the Tar Heels with 16 points and 10 rebounds. Ginyard finished with 15 points and eight boards, while Deon Thompson tallied 11 points and seven rebounds.

North Carolina held the advantage at the free-throw line, hitting 19-of-26 (73.1 pct.) attempts compared to 4-of-10 (40.0 pct.) for Syracuse. The Tar Heels outscored the Orange, 12-2, from the charity stripe in the first half.

Up next for Syracuse is a 7 p.m. contest against Central New York rival Cornell on Tuesday, Nov. 24 at the Carrier Dome. The game will be broadcast live on ESPN360.com.