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Freshman Leads UW Rally Over EWU

The 19-year-old point guard takes over with the game on the line, finishing with 22 points, six rebounds and five assists in his third college game as the Huskies (2-1) rally from 12 down to win 92-80.

[box score](#)

SEATTLE – And in his third game as a collegian, the teenager became Nigel Williams-BOSS.

Realizing the outside shots weren't falling, the depleted high-post offense was inert and that the Huskies had an advantage attacking off the dribble, Williams-Goss went "Boss" -- when the Huskies needed it most. He scored nine of UW's 11 points during the decisive stretch when the Dawgs tied Sunday night's game with Eastern Washington at 70, then took its first lead since the game's opening minute.

When the McDonald's All-American drove and scored while fouled, then completed a rousing, 3-point play, UW led 75-70 with 7:38 to go. They never lost that lead.

Williams-Goss finished with 22 points plus six rebounds and five assists to lead the Huskies back from a dozen points down in the second half to beat the Eagles 92-80 in the Seattle regional of the 2K Sports Classic benefiting the Wounded Warrior Project at relieved Alaska Airlines Arena.

"As the game went on those lanes became more open," said Williams-Goss, the 19-year old whose calmed, poised, understated demeanor didn't change whether the Huskies were down 12, when he gave them the lead, or after the victory.

"Coach (Lorenzo) Romar preaches to attack, attack, attack, offensively and defensively," he said. "I think we bought into the mindset to attack for 40 minutes."

Sunday, it took 30-plus minutes for that mindset to show up.

Perris Blackwell had 16 points and 11 rebounds in his second game for Washington (2-1), which trailed by 12 with 17 minutes to go and 11 with 13 minutes remaining -- after Thursday night's 14-point loss at home to UC-Irvine.

"Last game was all the motivation we needed to put that fight back in us," said Williams-Goss, who made nine of 15 field goals, most of which were dashes to the rim.

Hesitant to shoot early, C.J. Wilcox had 15 points on 4-for-13 shooting with eight rebounds for the Huskies, who now head to New York to play Indiana on Thursday night at Madison Square Garden in the semifinals of the 2K Sports Classic benefiting the Wounded Warrior Project. The Hoosiers improved to 4-0 on Sunday with a 90-74 win at home against Stony Brook.

The Huskies head to The Garden for the third time in three seasons knowing two hard facts about this season's team, after three games.

One: "When we've put forth the effort we've done a decent job," Romar said.

"When we haven't, we've looked putrid."

And, two: Romar's high-post offense has been forced into hibernation.

The season-ending knee surgery for versatile high-post Jernard Jarreau and Desmond Simmons' arthroscopic knee surgery that will have him out until mid-to-late December has forced Romar to rely on four guards spreading the floor with Blackwell as the lone low post.

Sunday, that's how Washington came back. The four guards -- Williams-Goss, Wilcox, Andrew Andrews, and usually Mike Anderson and/or Darin Johnson, or both -- were more adept at switching on the ball screens that had freed Eastern Washington's Tyler Harvey for 20 points in the first half.

On offense, the four guards -- with starter Shawn Kemp Jr. out -- could better take advantage of this season's emphasis by officials to call defenders for almost any contact with the arms or hands anywhere on the floor. With UW on its way to a 1-for-13 night on 3-point attempts, the guards began driving repeatedly from the wings and the top of the key. By the middle of the second half, three Eagles had four fouls each. Two eventually fouled out.

"We call it one of our 'special' teams, our 'spread-and-attack' team," Romar said.

And the Huskies made 31 of 34 free throws to make that drive-for-the-whistle tactic decisive.

"That was mentioned in a timeout, being able to attack more with the new rules," Wilcox said.

Romar was clear on the intent.

"We told them to put your head down and go to the lane," the coach said of his guards. "With the way the rules are, it makes it hard on the defense."

No Husky followed Romar's directive more exquisitely or decisively than Williams-Goss.

Eastern (1-1), of the Big Sky Conference, led 64-53 with 13 minutes left before Williams-Goss took off down the lane

for the first of his game-changing drives. His two free throws got UW to within 70-68 before his next layup tied it at 70. Wilcox got in on the drive party in the lane with a lay-in before Williams-Goss made a free throw and another layup for the 75-70 lead.

"Nigel showed tonight why he's been a part of so many wins in his young career," Romar said. "He just had a determined look, leading, constantly chattering.

"That's what a floor general does."

When asked when it was he realized he needed to take over, he deferred the praise to the big man Blackwell.

"I have to give a lot of credit to Perris for setting a lot of ball screens in transition," Williams-Goss said.

Being humble, steady, selfless – all while being the difference maker.

That's also what a floor general does.