

## Connecticut upsets No. 15 Syracuse behind Adams and Gilbert

**NEW YORK (AP)** -- Nothing less than the first major test Dan Hurley Era awaited the Connecticut Huskies.

UConn was facing a Top 25 opponent in a nationally televised game in one of basketball's iconic venues. For a group that has not been together for a full calendar year, it was fair to question how they would respond. Consider the test passed. With flying colors.

"They had a look the last couple days that they couldn't get here and play. They went out and performed at such a high level," Hurley said after Connecticut's 83-76 upset of No. 15 Syracuse in the first game of the 2K Empire Classic benefiting Wounded Warrior Project Thursday night.

In its first season under Hurley, Connecticut improved to 3-0. The Huskies took the 95th all-time meeting between the schools, and are 39-56 against Syracuse.

"These guys got what they deserved: A great moment in the Garden," said Hurley, whose team will meet either Iowa or Oregon in the championship game Friday.

Jalen Adams and Alterique Gilbert scored 16 points each to lead Connecticut. Tarin Smith added 14 for the Huskies. Eric Cobb finished with 13, and Christian Vital had 11.

"We got huge contributions across the board," Hurley said.

As satisfied as Hurley was with his team, Jim Boeheim was that disappointed in his. Syracuse dropped to 2-1 with its first loss of the season in a game in which the Orange missed 40 of their 66 shots from the field, including misfiring on 16 of 22 3s.

Not improving his mood was the fact UConn out rebounded Syracuse 46-32.

"We weren't in any way, shape or form good on the offensive end," said Boeheim, who later added, "we got crushed on the boards. We got crushed inside."

Jalen Carey led all scorers with 26. Tyus Battle had 16, and Elijah Hughes chipped in with 15.

"Jalen played with a lot of poise," said Boeheim, "but the guys we count on to score did not play well." From the opening tip, an unceasing cacophony filled Madison Square Garden, a reminder that these programs -Syracuse in the ACC, Connecticut in the American Athletic Conference -can trace their roots to the World's Most Famous Arena, and more specifically, the Big East Conference.

So it was only fitting that the game was played with a distinct Big East flavor. Easy shots were at a premium. Seemingly every loose ball was contested. Arms and legs were entangled with other arms and legs. Bodies fell to the famous hardwood. Players on the benches jumped up and roared with glee at every call that went their way. When they weren't stalking up and down the sidelines, Hurley and Boeheim were either gesticulating to the officiating staff or engaged in one-way conversations with their players. The Huskies led 38-32 at halftime due in part to a 13-4 run in the first 4:29, and outscoring the Orange, 9-7, in the last 5:01.

"We got after them to start the game," Hurley said. "They were rattled."

Connecticut opened the scoring in both halves. Adams slammed a back door, alley-oop jam just 14 seconds into the game, and Vital's left side 3 49 seconds into the second half increased the Huskies' lead to 41-32. Gilbert's left-side 3 5:06 later extended UConn's lead to 10, 51-41, and forced Boeheim to call a timeout.

When play resumed, Syracuse outscored UConn 25-19 over a span of 10:42 to cut the deficit to 70-66. But any chance Syracuse would complete the comeback were snuffed by Gilbert and Adams 3s on consecutive possessions. Smith, Tyler Polley, Gilbert and Adams combined to knock down seven of eight free throws in the final minute to seal the win.

"We didn't play very smart on offense and scored (76) points," Boeheim said. We've just got to be better on offense. Movement wasn't good. We have to get into things. We haven't been good offensively for all the game that we've played and we're trying to work guys out of position. We're not in sync (on) offense at all."