

Vandals' season ends - this time for good

Rebounding trouble rears its head as Idaho's unexpected postseason run comes to end with 69-59 loss to Pacific in second round of CIT

Tuesday, March 24, 2009

STOCKTON, Calif. - Sorry, Vandals. No free trip to Peoria for you.

Idaho's bonus season came to an abrupt end Monday night as the Vandals lapsed into their familiar rebounding woes in a 69-59 loss to Pacific in the quarterfinals of the CollegeInsider.com tournament.

It was announced before tipoff that the winner would advance to a semifinal game against Bradley on Wednesday night at Peoria, Ill. The Vandals would have gladly taken the trip, especially since the home teams are footing the bill in this first-year tournament.

But Idaho put forth one of its more pallid performances, getting outscored 17-4 in second-chance points, receiving little help from its perimeter shooters and falling behind by 16 with less than nine minutes left.

"One of the concerns coming into this game was the physical play and whether or not we were tough enough to compete," said Idaho coach Don Verlin, who lost his latest duel with his twin brother Ron Verlin, a Pacific assistant coach. "Their inside guys wore our inside guys down all night. Our interior defense just wasn't good enough tonight."

So a surprisingly solid season ends for the Vandals, who finished 17-16 with a 1-1 showing in this tournament. Idaho had assumed its season was done with a first-round loss in the Western Athletic Conference tournament two weeks ago, before receiving an invitation to the CIT, a tournament conceived largely by coaches at Midwestern mid-major schools.

Anthony Brown, a 6-foot-7 senior who hadn't cracked double figures in the Tigers' seven previous games, shot 6-for-6 and collected 13 points and six rebounds for Pacific (21-12).

Joe Ford matched those totals while shooting 5-for-6, and Sam Willard added 12 points and six boards.

"Playing on the road is hard," Verlin said. "You don't always get the calls you get at home, and this was a physical game and one in which they played very well in."

Idaho got 16 points from Mac Hopson, 12 from Marvin Jefferson and 11 from Terrence Simmons. But forward Brandon Wiley went scoreless from the field, and outside guns Trevor Morris and Luciano de Souza combined for 1-for-7 shooting, 1-for-6 from long range, and two points. And Hopson was held to four points after intermission.

"We played very hard," Verlin said. "We battled all night long and I was really happy with our effort. It's always hard when you lose a ballgame and I thought this was a game we could win."

The Vandals capitalized on a quickness advantage to score in transition occasionally in the first half, but Pacific countered with offensive boardwork and led 31-29 at intermission.

The Tigers wound up with 14 offensive rebounds. Idaho had 12 of its own but was far less successful with its putbacks.

"You have to be good when you come down here," Verlin said, noting Pacific's 80-percent success ratio in home games over the past two decades. "We were ready to go coming into the game, but this is a hard place to win. Pacific has a great program."

IDAHO (17-16)

Wiley 0-4 4-4 4, Jefferson 5-14 2-4 12, Hopson 7-12 1-2 16, Simmons 4-7 0-0 11, Watson 3-8 3-6 9, De Souza 1-4 0-0 3, Morris 0-3 0-0 0, Eisinger 1-1 0-0 2, Blackstock 0-0 0-0 0, Augusto 0-1 2-2 2. Totals 21-54 12-18 59.

PACIFIC (21-12)

Brown 6-6 1-2 13, Ford 5-6 3-3 13, Willard 6-11 0-0 12, Troyer 2-9 0-0 5, Kirby 0-6 0-0 0, Shipley 0-1 0-0 0, Neufville 1-5 0-2 3, Smith 0-2 8-9 8, Doran 3-3 0-0 7, Neimeyer 0-0 0-0 0, LeDuc 3-7 2-2 8. Totals 26-56 14-18 69.

Halftime - Pacific 31-29. 3-point goals - Idaho 5-13 (Hopson 1-3, Simmons 3-4, De Souza 1-3, Morris 0-3), Pacific 3-16 (Troyer 1-6, Kirby 0-5, Neufville 1-2, Doran 1-1, LeDuc 0-2). Fouled out - none. Rebounds - Idaho 30 (Jefferson 8), Pacific 38 (Brown 6, Ford 6, Willard 6, Smith 6). Assists - Idaho 13 (Wiley 3, Hopson 3, Watson 3), Pacific 14 (Smith 5). Total fouls - Idaho 17, Pacific 15. A - 2,140.