

NCAA TOURNAMENT: SACRAMENTO SUBREGIONAL

Commodores win in commanding fashion

WSU'S NEXT OPPONENT

Saturday, 2:40 p.m.

BY STEVE BERGUM

Staff writer

SACRAMENTO, Calif. – Vanderbilt University admitted it had taken exception earlier this week to suggestions it would be “shocked” and “stunned” by George Washington’s defensive pressure.

The Commodores responded Thursday afternoon by taking apart the Colonials 77-44 in the opening round of the NCAA East Regional men’s basketball tournament at Arco Arena.

Junior wing Shan Foster scored a game-

high 18 points and Derrick Byars and Alex Gordon combined for 22 more as sixth-seeded VU (21-11) used a barrage of first-half 3-pointers to brush aside 11th-seeded GW (23-9) and set up a second-round matchup against third-seeded Washington State, a 70-54 winner over 14th-seeded Oral Roberts earlier in the day.

The Commodores, who have nurtured a love interest in the 3-pointer all season, repeatedly beat the Colonials’ half-court zone trap to set up one uncontested shot after another. They connected on 10 of 18 first-half 3-pointers to open up a comfortable 45-20 halftime lead and then coasted to the lopsided victory, despite missing on 11 of their 13 second-half 3-point tries.

“We felt like if we could get out of their

traps and get moving – because we can pass and catch pretty well – that we’d get some pretty good shots,” Vanderbilt coach Kevin Stallings said.

The Commodores complemented their early torrid shooting with some stifling man-to-man defensive pressure that severely rattled George Washington. The Atlantic-10 Conference champion Colonials made only two of their first 17 shots and shot 27.1 percent (13 of 48) from the field.

“As well as we shot the ball tonight, the key to the game was defense on our part,” said Byars, the Southeastern Conference’s player of the year, who shook off a 2-for-9 first-half shooting performance to finish with 12 points and five assists. “Everybody contributed, which was good.

“But now we have our hands full with Washington State.”

Stallings said he expects to deal with a different kind of defensive pressure against WSU, which tends to play much more straight-up man than the zone-happy Colonials.

“One thing we do know is they guard for 40 minutes,” Stallings said of the Cougars. ... “Their defense is not surprising, but unusually, good. And when I say unusually, I mean it is good every night. They’re a three seed for a very good reason. George Washington is a good team, but Washington State is a cut above probably everyone in this pod, with the exception of UCLA.”

In Vanderbilt, WSU will face a perimeter-oriented team that launched 758 3-pointers.

BY THE NUMBERS

6

Shots, out of 25 attempts, that Washington State made at the beginning of Thursday’s game.

9

Shots, out of nine attempts, that the Cougars made immediately after their slow start.

5

Blocked shots by the Cougars’ Ivory Clark, all on attempts by Oral Roberts’ Caleb Green. Clark’s career high also established a WSU postseason record.

6

Turnovers by Washington State, compared with 12 by Oral Roberts.

1940

The last time the Cougars produced a 26-win season. Their win Thursday was No. 26.

10-2

Washington State’s record this season after trailing at halftime. Oral Roberts led the Cougars 28-26 at the break.

29

Minutes played by sophomore Derrick Low, who increased his season total to a school-record 1,122.

THEY SAID IT



“I thought they showed in the second half why they’re one of the best 10 or 15 teams in America.”

Scott Sutton
Oral Roberts coach



“We just wanted it bad. We didn’t want to come out and play like we did in the first half. We got all the jitters out.”

Kyle Weaver
WSU junior guard

BOX SCORE

Washington St. 70, Oral Roberts 54

Oral Roberts (23-11)	Min	M-A	M-A	O-T	A	PF	PTS
Ogunoye	29	0-0	1-2	1-4	0	0	1
Green	39	4-16	5-9	3-8	4	3	13
King	20	3-4	0-1	1-4	0	1	6
Tutt	40	7-17	2-2	0-1	3	19	
Liberty	24	1-5	1-1	0-2	3	3	
Sango	6	0-0	0-0	1-2	0	0	
Vealy	18	1-4	0-0	3-8	1	2	
Ehamebe	24	3-7	1-1	2-2	1	10	
Totals	200	19-53	10-16	14-34	13	54	

Percentages: FG .359, FT .625. 3-Point Goals: 6-20, .350 (Ehamebe 3-7, Tutt 3-10, Vealy 0-1, Liberty 0-2). Team Rebounds: 3. Blocked Shots: 4 (King 3, Sango). Turnovers: 12 (Green 4, Vealy 3, Ogunoye 2, King, Tutt, Liberty). Steals: 3 (Green 2, Sango). Technical Fouls: None.

Washington St. (26-7)	Min	M-A	M-A	O-T	A	PF	PTS
Weaver	32	5-8	0-0	4-8	4	3	10
Cowgill	30	3-8	1-2	2-5	0	4	7
Baynes	16	1-5	0-0	1-2	0	3	2
Low	29	5-7	0-0	0-4	3	12	
Rochestie	39	6-14	2-2	0-5	4	0	15
Hopson	7	0-2	0-0	0-0	1	0	
Harmeling	18	2-4	0-0	0-2	0	5	
Clark	29	5-9	8-8	1-6	1	0	19
Totals	200	27-57	11-12	11-36	12	70	

Percentages: FG .474, FT .917. 3-Point Goals: 5-13, .385 (Low 2-4, Harmeling 1-2, Clark 1-3, Rochestie 1-4). Team Rebounds: 4. Blocked Shots: 8 (Clark 5, Cowgill 2, Harmeling). Turnovers: 6 (Weaver 2, Cowgill, Baynes, Rochestie, Clark). Steals: 3 (Weaver, Cowgill, Baynes). Technical Fouls: None.

Halftime—Oral Roberts 28, Washington State 26. A-NA.

‘SKY-VORY’ RETURNS

Ivory Clark makes huge contributions

WSU NOTEBOOK

BY JIM MEEHAN

Staff writer

SACRAMENTO, Calif. – Washington State forward Ivory Clark hadn’t heard his nickname for a while: Sky-vory.

“I thought he died last week,” Clark said. “He’s been resuscitated I hope, and hopefully he’s here to stay.”

Clark’s acrobatic defense from the weak side helped put the clamps on Oral Roberts’ high-scoring forward Caleb Green, helping the Cougars to a 70-54 NCAA tournament victory Thursday at Arco Arena. Green, who entered the game with nine straight 20-point games, was limited to 13 points, his lowest total since the Golden Eagles’ season opener.

Green and sharp-shooting guard Ken Tutt, who combine to average 36.5 points per game, were the focus of WSU’s defense, so much so that the Cougars threw black pinnies jerseys on players in practice this week to emulate the pair.

The Cougars opened the game trapping Green when he caught the ball.

Green made just 4 of 16 shots and committed four turnovers. Green several times tried to navigate through two defenders, only to lose the ball or force off-balance shots. When Tutt’s perimeter shooting cooled off, Oral Roberts went to Green on nearly every possession. Clark swatted two of Green’s shots near the end of the first half and rejected another on the opening series of the second half.

“Ivory’s undersized, but he’s so long he can go up and take those big-boy shots off the rim,” guard Derrick Low said.

Clark, whose playing time had diminished the last couple weeks, equaled a season high with five blocks. Cowgill swatted two more.

Green smiled on the court throughout the first half, but that changed in the second half as his frustration level climbed.

Guard turnaround

WSU’s backcourt of Derrick Low, Taylor Rochestie and Kyle Weaver got off to a rugged start. Weaver picked up his second foul at the 16-minute mark and went to the bench for more than 8 minutes. He came back just before Low picked up his second foul with 7:07 left and went to the sidelines. Weaver didn’t score until hitting a



WSU’s Kyle Weaver flushes down a dunk over the defense of Oral Roberts’ Marchello Vealy.



Coach Tony Bennett shakes the hand of Ivory Clark after the Cougars beat Oral Roberts 70-54 in the first round.

putback with 3:30 remaining and Low was limited to four first-half points. Rochestie had a couple of early shot attempts swatted in the lane before he began to heat up.

Late in the half, Rochestie scored on a difficult, hanging jumper in the paint and Weaver followed with a steal and dunk just before the buzzer.

“They’ve got some great shot

blockers and at the end of the half I went up to shoot and I saw about seven hands in the air waiting to block the shot,” said Rochestie, who finished with 15 points and four assists. “So I kind of had to hold off a little and let it go at the end.”

Low made two 3-pointers and totaled 12 points and three assists. Weaver came back to put up 10 points, eight rebounds and four assists.

“That foul trouble hurt us,” Cougars coach Tony Bennett said, “but I did think we held our composure and then we had that flurry at the end that got it down to a one-possession game.”

WSU shot 59.3 percent in the second half and had just one turnover. The Cougars scored on 10 of their first 11 possessions in the second half.

Picked on

WSU was well aware of

numerous national pundits who predicted No. 14 Oral Roberts would upset the third-seeded Cougars. Coach Tony Bennett even offered a gentle reminder prior to the game.

“We were kind of the upset special and I challenged our guys,” Bennett said.

“It’s just like you were picked 10th in the Pac-10 and I said, ‘Your reward for having this good of a season and finishing second is to play in one of the greatest sporting events going. But you have to start over and prove it now.’”

The Cougars expect more of the same from the national media in the second round against sixth-seeded Vanderbilt.

“Those naysayers will say we’ll lose our next game,” Rochestie said. “As far as that’s concerned, we hear it but we don’t listen to it. In here, we have confidence and we know we can play.”

COUGARS

Continued from C1

matched the school record for victories in a season, set in 1940-41.

“It’s not satisfying yet,” Weaver said. “It’s definitely a good feeling getting this first one.

“We just wanted it bad. We didn’t want to come out and play like we did in the first half. We got all the jitters out.” And how. The Cougars, now 10-2 on the season when trailing at halftime, went on a 16-2 run to start the second half and never looked back.

Working off of its usual script, WSU got the win thanks to contributions from a number of players. Ivory Clark, coming off the bench and out of the doghouse, scored a game-high 19 points and had five blocks. Derrick Low, rebounding from a spotty second half of the season, had 12 big points. Rochestie had 15 and helped run a

patient Cougar offense. And Robbie Cowgill handled ORU power forward Caleb Green with skill on the defensive end, holding the star to 13 points and helping to frustrate the 14th-seeded Golden Eagles.

“In this tournament you need some balance and I think we showed that,” Cougar coach Tony Bennett said. “Maybe we wore them down a little bit.”

In the process, the Cougars seemed to prove how and why they’ve gotten this far.

“I don’t know if we need to validate anything,” Low said. “I just think we need to play good basketball. We know that our season can end within any game and we want to make the best of it.”

The Golden Eagles (23-11) were the more experienced NCAA tournament team, having played and lost in the first round last season. Early, it appeared that they were the more comfortable team. ORU collected 10 first-half rebounds on

offense and turned them into 11 points.

But everything that ORU tried in the second half seemed to go poorly. When the Golden Eagles threw the ball inside to Green, Cowgill and Clark were there to harass him. When they tried a full-court press, WSU broke it with ease and scored easy buckets. And when they forced tough shots, the Cougars made them anyway.

“I thought they showed in the second half why they’re one of the best 10 or 15 teams in America,” ORU coach Scott Sutton said. “They executed. They made shots. They made it tough on us to score.”

Things will not get any easier for the Cougars. They’ll next play sixth-seeded Vanderbilt, which defeated George Washington by 33 points on Saturday. On the line will be a spot in the Sweet 16, somewhere WSU has never been since the tournament’s expansion.

As for those who picked the Cougars to lose in the first round? Well, WSU seems

perfectly content to keep on playing the underdog in this tournament as it goes for a school-record 27th win on Saturday.

“I think they can say what they want to say and we’ll just do what we do and believe in ourselves and stay together,” Cowgill said. “What they’ll probably say is, ‘Just look at the first half.’ That’s OK. We really do believe in this system. We know if we play the right way ... we’ll be able to compete in the second half.”

Notes

Clark’s five blocks tied a career high. ... Weaver had 10 points for the game despite committing his second foul just four minutes into the game. Bennett had his junior guard on the floor for the last 7 minutes of the half despite the foul trouble. ... ORU’s Ken Tutt had 19 points to lead the Golden Eagles, but outside of Tutt and Green they managed just 22 points. ... The Cougars made 16 of 27 second-half field goals.