



The Cleveland State men's basketball team staged a dramatic second half comeback on Saturday afternoon at the Wolstein Center to pull out a 73-69 win over Iona.

Trailing by 15 at the half, CSU outscored Iona 44-25 in the second half.

The Vikings (1-0) knocked off a quality Iona (0-1) team that has been to two straight NCAA tournaments and were picked to finish second in the MAAC.

"We had to develop our identity," said CSU head coach Gary Waters. "And when I mean identity, I mean these kids have to believe they can win big games."

The Vikings held the Gaels to 11 points under its NCAA-leading scoring average of 80.38 points per game last season.

Give credit to Waters who made a halftime adjustment going to a smaller lineup to start the second half. He replaced Marlin Mason and Devon Long with the quicker Sebastian Douglas and Jon Harris.

"I had to match their quickness," said Waters.

The move would pay off for the Vikings as they started the second half on a 11-0 run to close within 44-40 on Bryn Forbes' second three-pointer of the half.

Yet it was another adjustment later in the game that might have turned the game around.

Midway through the second half, Waters went to an even smaller lineup. Going with Charlie Lee at the point, Trey Lewis at the two, Forbes at the three, Douglas at the four and Anton Grady at the five.

"We had to get as quick as they were," said Waters. "They were only scoring in the fullcourt and we had to make it a halfcourt game. Once we got it into a halfcourt game, we knew we could control them because they had to take jump shots in front of us."

After Iona pushed the lead out to 64-52 with 7:44 left, CSU's defense would get tough, holding the Gaels to only one field goal the rest of the game.

CSU scored 12 straight points to tie the game at 64-64 on back-to-back three-pointers from Mason and Forbes.

Two minutes later, Lewis' three-pointer gave CSU its first lead, 69-67, since midway through the first half when they led 21-20.

With 25 seconds left, Lewis made two free throws to put the Vikings up for good, 71-69. Lewis scored seven of his 12 points in the final 2:58 to help the Vikings start the season with a win.

The Vikings' defense held the Gaels to only nine field goals in the second half.

"When you hold a team to 24 percent {in the second half}, that's unbelievable defense," said Waters.

Forbes scored 17 of his game-high 22 points in the second half. Grady added 13 points and 11 rebounds, with Harris contributing 10 points and seven rebounds off the bench.

David Laury led Iona with 19 points and 10 rebounds. Sean Armand added 17 for the Gaels, with Tre Bowman contributing 14.

The Vikings attacked the glass, grabbing 22 offensive boards to just 16 for Iona for a 48-43 overall rebounding edge.

"I thought our bench was great today," said Waters. "Without them, it would have been a different game."

CSU got 24 points from its bench.

The first half was close until Grady picked up his second foul with 9:14 left and sat on the bench for the rest of the half.

At the time, Iona led 24-21, but without Grady on the floor, the Gaels closed out the half on a 20-8 run to take a 44-29 advantage at the break.

Iona shot 53 percent in the opening half, while CSU struggled shooting 29.5 percent.

The Vikings are back in action on Wednesday night for their first road game of the season at San Francisco. Tipoff is 11 p.m. EST.