



It's not how you start, but how you finish. For the Cleveland State men's basketball team closing out games has been a major issue this season.

The Vikings have held second half leads in every game this season.

They held a nine-point lead at San Francisco with nine minutes left and lost by nine.

On Monday, CSU held a 12-point lead at No. 3 Kentucky with 14 minutes left only to lose 68-61.

On Saturday, CSU had a six-point lead on Ball State with 11 minutes to go.

This time they were able to close out the game, using a 19-5 run to push the lead out to 20, then held onto a 78-55 victory at the Wolstein Center.

"I thought our guys came out to play today, especially on the defensive end," said Vikings head

coach Gary Waters. "We held them to 35 percent. That was the game."

The Vikings played without starting point guard Charlie Lee, who missed his second game with a strain ACL.

"The ligaments are in place," said Waters. "He has to get stronger. He can't move laterally as quick as he could, so we are taking our time."

Sophomore guard Trey Lewis played well again in his second straight start replacing Lee in the starting lineup.

After scoring 15 points in a loss to Kentucky, Lewis finished with a career-high 23 points on 7-of-10 shooting from the floor. The Garfield Heights native also added four assists and five rebounds in 37 minutes.

"[Lewis is] going to be tremendous," said Waters. "His future is unbelievable. I only see him getting better."

Despite Lewis' two impressive starts, Waters wasn't ready to name him a starter.

"I don't know. That's something I got to think about," said Waters.

Bryn Forbes and Jon Harris each added 15 points for CSU who improved to 4-3 overall and 3-0 at the Wolstein Center.

Chris Bond led Ball State (2-4) with 17 points, while Jesse Berry added 10.

The Vikings shot a season-best 62.8 percent from the field. It was CSU's best shooting night since Feb. 3, 2012 when they shot 67.6 percent in a win at Loyola of Chicago.

They also held Ball State to season-lows in points (55), field goal percentage (35.6) and field goals (16). The Vikings scored 23 points off 14 Ball State turnovers.

It was CSU who clamped down on defense early. They held Ball State without a field goal for nearly five minutes to start the game. The Cardinals started out 0-for-5 with two turnovers as CSU built an 8-0 lead and never looked back.

The Vikings shot 61.9 percent in the first half and took a 39-32 lead at the break. Ball State shot 37.5 percent in the first half, but were able to keep the game close as they shot 11-of-13 at the line. Forbes paced the Vikings with 15 first half points, while Lewis added 10.

A three-pointer by Ball State's Zavier Turner to start the second half cut it to 39-35.

Harris' dunk with 13:19 left pushed the lead back out to double-digits (49-39).

Ball State would make one last run cutting it to 51-45 on Mark Alstork's layup.

That's when CSU went on its decisive 19-5 run to seal the game.

"It started with our defense," said Lewis. "We had to get back to our identity which is defense. So we focused in and defended well and that allowed us to take control of the game."

During the run, CSU's defense held the Cardinals to only two field goals over the next six minutes as four different Vikings scored. Sebastian Douglas paced the run with six points. They also got contributions from Harris (5 points), Lewis (4) and Grady (4).

"I thought we opened it up when we started to make fast break layups," said Waters.

The Vikings are back in action on Wednesday at Drexel, who is coming off an impressive triple-overtime victory against Alabama on Friday.