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Cleveland State returned to the Wolstein Center last night for the first time since January 19<sup>th</sup> looking to hold serve and save the once promising season. Instead, the team that showed up bared no resemblance to the team that dazzled fans prior to the road trip during upsets of Butler and Valparaiso. CSU looked flat on offense and lost on defense during much of the game, dropping a 55-49 decision to Wright State.

Looking for a change-up, Coach Gary Waters inserted freshman D'Aundray Brown into the starting lineup for the first time this season. The move pushed J'Nathan Bullock back to power forward, his position the two previous seasons, and moved George Tandy to the bench. The power forward spot has been a disappointment all year, as Kevin Francis started the first seven games of the season before being benched because of poor shooting and inconsistent rebounding. Tandy was inserted into the starting lineup on December 1<sup>st</sup>. Although Francis has played well off the bench since the move, Tandy has all but disappeared.

The Vikings came out of the gate and gave up ten quick points, falling behind 10-0 with 17:06 remaining in the first. WSU spread the ball around, seeing four different players make baskets during the run, including threes by Todd Brown and Scottie Wilson.

After the horrible start to the game, the Vikings were able to make two legitimate runs at the Raiders. The first threat came in the first half after falling behind 15-2. CSU responded with a 12-0 run to cut the deficit to one. The surge was sparked by threes from Francis, Joe Davis and Bullock. The run turned out to be fools gold, as the Vikings became comfortable relying on outside shots despite making only two-of-17 three-pointers for the duration of the game.

The Raiders pushed the lead back out to six at the half and eventually back to ten with 13:48 remaining in the game. The second threat emerged when the Vikings connected on their only other three-pointers of the night. Francis and Davis drained shots from beyond the arc and Davis made a beautiful driving, pivoting move in the paint to bring CSU within two at 43-41 with 6:37 remaining in the game.

On the ensuing possession, WSU's Graham easily penetrated and found Cooper Rand open in the corner for an uncontested three, making the score 46-41. Todd Brown then stole the

inbounds pass and found Graham for a lay-up and the game was essentially over. The Vikings never led in the contest.

Joe Davis led the Vikings with 11 points on only four-of-12 shooting (2-7 from three). D'Aundray Brown and Jackson each added ten points. Todd Brown and Duggins led Wright State with 12 points a piece.

Jackson was clearly not completely healed from a nagging ankle injury that bothered him during the road trip. The junior point guard played the entire game with a noticeable limp and had trouble defending and penetrating, his two strongest attributes. Without Jackson driving and finding opportunities for his teammates, the CSU offense resembled the Cavaliers, with wasted passes around the perimeter and obsessive dribbling by the guards until a desperation three-pointer was jacked-up with the shot clock winding down. The Vikings finished 5-21 from beyond the arc.

CSU has completely lost its identity, which during the winning streak was to play pressure defense and contest every shot while suffocating the opposition's offense. CSU is giving up too many easy baskets because of breakdowns in the defense. Compounding the problem, they haven't found a consistent threat on offense to build around. Where Jackson was once looked upon as that threat, he's now just a shadow of himself

because of the ankle injury.

Next for the Vikings are the Detroit-Mercy Titans. UDM enters the contest last in the Horizon League at 5-17, 1-11. CSU won at UDM on January 10<sup>th</sup>, the Vikings first ever victory in the city of Detroit. The Titans are led by John Goode. The senior guard from Flint averages 19.6 ppg and shoots .444 (67-151) from three. Goode scored 17 points in the first meeting but Breyohn Watson held his former high school teammate to just one-of-seven shooting from beyond the arc.

Watson and the Vikings will look to regain their defensive presence Saturday at 5:30pm at the Wolstein Center.