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Cleveland State made the trip to historic Hinkle Fieldhouse hoping to pull off a second straight upset of nationally ranked Butler. Instead, the Vikings ran into an experienced group of Bulldogs with revenge on their minds, 9,000 rowdy fans and some curious calls from the officials in a 51-46 defeat.

The tale of the first half was Butler big man Matt Howard. The 6'7" freshman was a bull in a china shop to start the contest. By the 13:37 mark in the first half, Howard had six points and two rebounds while putting the Vikings front line in serious foul trouble. CSU's George Tandy and Chris Moore were sent to the bench early with two fouls a piece and Kevin Francis quickly picked up a foul of his own trying to guard Howard.

Despite the foul trouble the Vikings hung tough throughout the majority of the first half. Staying in the game was no small feat, as the offense was unable to find its rhythm. The Vikings went over seven minutes without a field goal during one stretch of the first half.

The refs didn't help matters with their inconsistencies, allowing the Bulldogs to

play aggressive defense while calling CSU for hand checks on the other end. The fouls called on CSU were illegal by the definition of the rule, but often times no advantage was gained by the defensive player when the foul was called. The fact that Butler was allowed to impede Cedric Jackson and J'Nathan Bullock on their drives with arm bars and holding just added to the frustration.

Jackson picked up the slack on his own, fighting through the adversity by attacking the Butler defense and forcing his way to the free throw line. The junior point guard single handedly kept the Vikings in the game. He finished the first half seven-for-eight from the charity stripe, keeping the Vikings within eight, 33-25.

The second half tightened up quickly. CSU came out of the locker room firing on all cylinders on the offensive end. Three-pointers from Breyohn Watson and Bullock were followed by field goals from D'Aundray Brown and Jackson to bring CSU within two at 38-36. After trading baskets, the Vikings called on Bullock for an important series of events.

Trailing by two, Bullock went to work in the post, kissing in a turnaround jumper off the glass to tie the score at 40. After a defensive stop and a soaring rebound by George Tandy, the Vikings again called Bullock's number in the post. The 6'5" 240 pound junior responded with a powerful move, finishing the play through contact. The referee under the basket whistled the defender for a block and it appeared as though the Vikings had regained the lead for the first time since the 12:58 mark in the first half. Instead of taking a 42-40 lead with a foul shot to come from the 84-percent free throw shooter, the refs huddled and reversed the call, tagging Bullock with a charge and taking the points off the board.

The score remained tied for all of eight seconds, as Julian Betko nailed a three-pointer for Butler on the ensuing possession. The wind seemed to be taken out of the Vikings' sails, as it would be another five minutes before CSU scored again. Missed lay-ups by Jackson and Francis and a turnover by Watson on a fast break did in the Vikings chances and they never closed the gap below the three point deficit.

Jackson led CSU with 20 points while adding five assists, five rebounds and four steals. He finished 10-11 from the line. Bullock was the only other Viking in double figures, finishing with 11. Howard led Butler with 17 points and eight rebounds. A.J. Graves added 15 points for the Bulldogs.

The Vikings return home to take on UW-Milwaukee on Wednesday at 7 pm before hosting Marist in a nationally televised (ESPN U) bracket buster contest on Saturday at 6 pm.