

## Cleveland State's Norris Cole Battles the Flu, Leads Vikings Past YSU

Written by {ga=tommieskoski}

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Cleveland State senior guard Norris Cole battled the flu this week.



Then went out on Saturday and did his best Michael Jordan impersonation against Youngstown State.

In a game reminiscent of Michael Jordan's infamous performance in Game 5 of the 1997 NBA Finals aka "The Flu Game," the 6'2" Cole finished with 41 points, 20 rebounds and nine assists, leading the Vikings past the Penguins, 86-76, in front of 3,875 fans at the Wolstein Center.

The only other player in the past 15 years in college basketball to have 40 points and 20 rebounds in a game was Oklahoma's Blake Griffin in 2009.

"I don't really play the stats when I'm out there playing," said Cole, whose previous career-high was 38 points against Florida A & M last season. "After the game, I heard I needed one more (assist for the triple-double). It would have been nice to get it, but I'll take the win any day."

It was the third most points scored in a game by a CSU player and the most since Damon

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Stringer's 47 against Wisconsin-Milwaukee in 2000.

Cole set new career-highs in points (41) and rebounds (20). His remarkable performance included having a double-double in each half.

He went 11-of-22 from the field, 14-of-17 from the line and 5-of-10 from the 3-point line.

"The basket just feels big. You don't get tired," said Cole. "The game slows down for you. It makes the team more comfortable, because they are looking to you for that energy."

Before the game Cole got some inspiration words from CSU head coach Gary Waters.

"I told him at the shootaround that (Michael) Jordan had his big night when he had the flu," said Waters, referring to Jordan's 38-point performance against the Utah Jazz in Game 5 of the 1997 NBA Finals. "And that's exactly what he went out there and did."

The Vikings improved to 22-5 and 11-4 in the Horizon League. They remain in second-place, a half-game behind Valparaiso (11-3 Horizon League).

By halftime Cole had scored 21 of CSU's 34 points. The Vikings were luckily only to be down 36-34 at the half as only two other players scored for the Vikings.

At halftime, Waters put out a challenge to his team.

"He told us to fight and be more active," said Cole. "We all responded to the challenge and me being the senior I had to lead the challenge and that was my mindset."

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The Vikings finally pulled away with about eight minutes remaining. With the score tied at 65-65, Cole sank a 3-pointer that proved to be the go-ahead basket.

YSU (8-17, 2-13) would cut it to 70-68 on a 3-pointer from Cleveland-native Ashen Ward, but that would be as close as they would get.

Cole refused to let CSU lose the game. He responded with a 3-pointer of his own and then a lay-up on their next possession to extend the lead to, 75-68, with just under four minutes remaining.

Trevon Harmon, who was also battling the flu, finished with 17 points for CSU. Juniors Aaron Pogue and Jeremy Montgomery each contributed 10 points for the Vikings.

YSU was led by Damian Eargle with 22 points and Ward had 15.

CSU's next game is Wednesday at Wright State.

*Photo courtesy of Cleveland State Athletics*