

Cleveland State Comes out Flat, Loses to Valparaiso

Written by {ga=tommieskoski}

Thursday, February 09 2012 9:30 AM - Last Updated Saturday, February 11 2012 10:47 AM



The showdown for first place in the Horizon League turned into a one-sided affair on Thursday night.

Playing in front of its second largest crowd of the season, Cleveland State laid an egg as Valparaiso took control of the Horizon with a 59-41 victory at the Wolstein Center in front of 4,521 fans.

"We just didn't play very well," said CSU head coach Gary Waters. "When you score 41 points and shoot 25 percent, it's hard to beat anyone."

Valpo (18-8, 11-3 HL) leads CSU (20-5, 10-3 HL) by a half game in the standings with over two weeks left in the regular season.

The Crusaders also own the tie-breaker against CSU after sweeping the regular-season head-to-heads between the two teams (2-0).

Valpo only made 18 field goals in the game, but 11 of them were three-pointers.

Juniors Ryan Broekhoff and Richie Edwards did most of the damage from behind the arc. They went a combined 10-of-16 from downtown and scored 44 of Valpo's 59 points.

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"I got to give them credit, they ran their offense efficient," said Waters. "It was one of those games they hit shots. Those threes were demoralizing."

The Vikings shot 25.9 percent from the field, but were only 1-of-13 from downtown.

CSU scored the first point of the game, then it was all Valpo.

The Crusaders raced out to first-half leads of 17-1 and 28-8. Their first six field goals of the game were all three pointers—three each by Broekhoff and Edwards.

CSU closed out the half on a 9-1 run to cut the lead down to 12 (29-17) at intermission.

In the opening half, Valpo made only nine field goals, but were 7-of-13 (53.8 percent) from downtown. The Vikings shot 6-of-25 (24 percent) in the first half.

Broekhoff led the Crusaders at the half with 14 points, making all four of his three point attempts. Edwards contributed 12 points at the half, going 3-of-5 from behind the arc.

"You can't miss nine lay-ups in the first half and expect to win," said Waters. "When you miss nine lay-ups that's either a lack of focus or you're uptight. This is college basketball. You got to be able to complete those plays."

The second half was more of the same.

Valpo started the second half with back-to-back three-pointers from Broekhoff and Will Bogan. Then a three-point play from Edwards and another three pointer by Broekhoff put the Crusaders back up by 20 (41-21) with 13:52 left in the game.

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CSU wouldn't get any closer then 13 points the rest of the game.

Broekhoff finished with game-highs of 24 points and 10 rebounds. Edwards, a reserve center who was 5-of-7 on three pointers coming into the game, made four Thursday and finished with 20 points.

"In my estimation, Broekhoff is the best player in the league," said Waters. "(Edwards) stepping out and hitting shots that was deflating."

Jeremy Montgomery was the only Viking in double figures with 15 points.

D'Aundray Brown tried to play through the groin injury but struggled and was limited to eight minutes in the first half. He didn't play in the second half. CSU also played without freshmen reserve Ike Nwamu, who was out with a concussion.

The Vikings host Butler on Saturday morning (11 a.m. ET) in a nationally-televised game on ESPN2.

Photo: Courtesy of Cleveland State athletics