

## Seahawks overcome halftime deficit to drop Golden Knights

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After the University of Central Florida lost their home opener to Wartburg College, a NCAA Division III team, UNC Wilmington men's basketball Head Coach Jerry Wainwright knew the Golden Knights were coming into Trask Coliseum Dec. 22 feeling rather uncomfortable.

"Prior to the game, I said they

would be desperate." Wainwright said during the post-game press conference. "If I was their coach, I would have been embarrassed and desperate [following the loss to Wartburg]." Wainwright added he meant the comments without disrespect and felt UCF would have a good year overall.

In an attempt to regain confidence, UCF hoped to catch UNCW off-guard. Despite valiant efforts, the Golden Knights fell to the

Seahawks, 61-56, in front of 3,522 spectators.

UNCW (4-4) took control of the game early off the hot hand of junior Ed Williams. Williams racked-up eight of his 10 points in the first half, as well as grabbing five rebounds that helped the Seahawks keep the Golden Knights in check.

With UNCW leading 22-11 with 10 minutes left to play in the first half, UCF Head Coach Kirk Speraw decided the Golden Knights needed

a change to silence the efforts of Williams and fellow teammate Barron Thelmon. Thelmon, a senior from Chicago, added eight points in the first, which included two key 3-pointers.

"We felt like we needed to make a change so we decided to get out on their perimeter shooters," Speraw said.

Speraw spread the zone defense out to the 3-point-line to combat the long-range bombers of UNCW. The Seahawks attempted 15 3-pointers in the first, part of a school-record 26 attempts for the game.

The strategy was effective as UCF (2-7) went on a 25-5 run over UNCW to finish out the half, while limiting the Seahawks to zero points outside the perimeter. The Golden Knights went into halftime with a 35-29 lead.

Realizing the correction, UNCW came out into the second half with a different offensive game plan - get the ball inside. Sophomore Craig Callahan stepped-up to the UCF challenge netting two career highs, grabbing seven rebounds and sinking 12 points in the post for the Seahawks.

"We had to get something going on the inside," said Callahan, a native of Cascade, Iowa. "They were real soft on the post. We worked harder than them."

UNCW senior Marcus Green, with the help of Callahan, controlled the inside game in the second. The Seahawks out-rebounded UCF 24-15 in the half, setting up several inside baskets that added to the Seahawk comeback.

The Seahawks retook the lead with 9:16 remaining after a 3-pointer by sophomore Brett Blizzard and never gave it back.

UCF went 3-for-9 from the free throw line in the second half, and their high-scorer, junior Paul Reed, only added four points in the final 20 minutes, all of which added to their downfall.

"You've got to win your home games," Wainwright said. "You've got to be in these kind of games to understand what it takes."

#### GAME NOTES:

- o The win was UNCW's first victory of the season when not leading at halftime.
- o Brett Blizzard and Ed Williams continued their season streak of scoring in double-figures in every game.

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