

SPORTS

NCCU MOVES TO TOP OF MEAC WITH GRITTY WIN OVER MORGAN STATE Eagles Rally from 13-Point Second-Half Deficit to Extend Home Win Streak to 19 Games

North Carolina Central University trailed Morgan State University by as many as 13 points in the second half, but NCCU junior forward Karamo Jawara's free throw with less than a second remaining

lifted the Eagles to a dramatic 53-52 come-from-behind victory on Monday night in front of a boisterous crowd inside McDougald-McLendon Gym.

NCCU extends its home win streak to 19 games and, thanks to a Savannah State loss to Norfolk State on Monday, the Eagles grab sole possession of first place in the MEAC with a 5-1 conference record.

After trailing at the half for the first time at home all season, NCCU faced a 32-19 deficit when MSU forward Cedric Blossom made a layup with 18:57 left in the contest. The lead for the visiting Bears was 41-30 at the 11:16 mark when the Eagles started their game-changing spurt.

NCCU senior Jeremy Ingram electrified the fans by nailing his team's only three-point basket to give the Eagles a 44-43 edge with 5:25 on the clock. Moments later, Ingram sent the crowd into a frenzy with a break-away dunk to increase NCCU's advantage to 47-43 at 4:26, capping a 17-2 run.

Morgan State responded to the rally by staying close with the Eagles down the stretch, and tied the score at 52-52 on a jumper by Donte Pretlow with 34 seconds remaining.

After an NCCU timeout, the Eagles held the ball for a final shot. Ingram mishandled a back-door pass on the baseline, then grabbed the loose ball and found Jawara near the top of the key for a last second, 18-foot attempt. MSU forward Shaquille Duncan leaped to contest the game-winning try, but made contact with Jawara and was whistled for the foul.

Jawara calmly drained the first of two free throws with nine-tenths of a second on the clock to provide the Eagles with a one-point advantage. Following an NCCU timeout, Jawara intentionally missed the second free throw, which was grabbed by Bears center Ian Chiles with seven-tenths of a second remaining.

After a Morgan State timeout, Thair Heath threw a full-court pass in the direction of the Bears' 7-foot-2 center, but the ball slid through Chiles' hands and the final buzzer sounded.

Ingram finished the contest with a game-high 20 points for NCCU (14-5, 5-1 MEAC), while Jawara added 13 points and six rebounds for the Eagles. NCCU junior center Jay Copeland added seven points and six boards, senior point guard Emanuel Chapman stuffed the stat sheet with four points, six caroms, six assists and four steals, and junior guard Jordan Parks came off the bench to grab a team-best eight rebounds.

The Eagles bounced back from a poor-shooting first half, connecting on just 8-of-28 field goals (28.6 percent) in the opening 20 minutes, to convert 11-of-25 shots (44.0 percent) in the second half.

Morgan State (6-12, 4-2 MEAC) was topped by senior guard Justin Black with 17 points, four rebounds, five steals and four assists. Black, who entered the contest as the MEAC's third-leading scorer, netted 14 points by intermission, but was held to just three points on 1-for-4 shooting in the second half. Chiles contributed eight points and a team-high eight boards for the Bears.

After five straight home games, NCCU hits the road on a six-game win streak to face Howard University on Saturday, Feb. 1 in Washington, D.C.

NCCU'S WILKINS NAMED

SBN BLACK COLLEGE ALL-AMERICAN

Sophomore Return Specialist. Fellow All-Americans to be Honored Feb. 28 in Atlanta
PITTSBURGH, Pa. - American Urban Radio Networks and its partner, the Black College Football Hall of Fame, announced North Carolina Central University sophomore Adrian Wilkins as a member of the 2013 SBN Sports Black College All-American Team.

Wilkins and his fellow All-Americans will be honored at the 40th Annual SBN Black College All-American Awards Reception on Feb. 28 in Atlanta, and again during the Black College Hall of Fame Enshrinement Ceremony on March 1 in Atlanta.

A native of Forest City, Wilkins earned the distinction as black college football's top return specialist after finishing the 2013 season as the only student-athlete in the NCAA Division I-FCS with five special teams return touchdowns with scores on three kickoff returns (100, 96, 91 yards) and two punt returns (89, 73 yards).

He topped the MEAC in punt returns (13.4 yards per return) and ranked second in kickoff returns (30.3 yards per return). As a receiver, Wilkins led the Eagles with 37 catches for 427 yards and two touchdowns.

Not only did he top the conference in all-purpose yards (123.5 yards per game), but he became the only Eagle in the NCCU record books with a kickoff return touchdown, a punt return touchdown and a receiving touchdown in the same season.

A first-team all-conference pick as a return specialist, Wilkins was chosen as the MEAC Special Teams Player of the Week four times this year.

Wilkins has now earned all-America honors from Beyond Sports Network, BOXTOWRO, The Sports Network, College Sporting News and American Urban Radio Networks SBN, while College Football Performance Awards presented the sophomore with its FCS Elite Kickoff Returner Award.

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Freeman Leads Lady Eagles with 18

NCCU WOMEN'S BASKETBALL UNABLE TO PULL OFF COMEBACK UPSET OVER CSU

By Andrea Wheeler, Assistant Sports Information Director

Despite going on a 12-2 run during the final 46 seconds of the game to cut the deficit to five, the North Carolina Central University women's basketball team (7-11, 2-3 MEAC) dropped a 67-58 decision to the Coppin State Eagles (8-10, 5-1 MEAC) on Saturday, Jan. 25 inside McDougald-McLendon Gymnasium.

Redshirt senior Jessica Freeman (Charlotte) led the Lady Eagles offensively for the 10th time this season collecting a game-high 18 points on 4-for-14 shooting from the field, 2-for-10 from behind the arc and 8-for-8 from the charity stripe while also earning a game-high five steals.

Junior Raquel Davis (Brooklyn, N.Y.) added her seventh double-double of the season to the NCCU shortcoming with 15 points and 12 boards in addition to Khyra Conerly's (Oakland, Calif.) 12 points, four assists and four steals.

CSU scored first during the first half off of a free throw from Kyra Coleman at the 19:42 mark.

The Lady Eagles answered after junior Rachel Williams (Rancho Cucamonga, Calif.) connected with Freeman on the wing to put NCCU on top 2-1.

The remainder of the first 20 minutes was a back and forth battle between both Eagles, as the game saw three ties and 12 lead changes and neither team led by more than three points.

The visiting Eagles scored last with 1:03 left in the first half taking the one-point advantage into the locker room, leading NCCU 24-23.

After the intermission, the host Lady Eagles scored on back-to-back possession cutting the three-point lead at the 18:26 mark on a bucket from Conerly.

NCCU went without a field goal for the next 12 minutes, relying solely on shots from the free throw line, until Conerly converted a steal into a fast break layup at the 6:58 mark to knock the CSU lead to eight.

A 9-4 run for the visiting Eagles gave Coppin State its largest lead of the contest at 34-27 after Ashle Craig knocked down a shot from behind the arc with 2:24 left in the game. With 1:19 left on the game clock CSU's Larrisa Carter was called for a technical foul under the host Lady Eagle's basket.

Conerly and Freeman each knocked down a pair of shots from the charity stripe cutting the Coppin State lead to 11.

After regaining possession, Conerly kicked a pass to Freeman in the left corner where she knocked down the shot before NCCU head coach Vanessa Taylor called a thirty second timeout.

Out of the timeout, CSU's Craig turned over the ball under the Lady Eagles basket. Freeman put up another three ball attempt, while Davis pulled down the offensive board and completed the layup to cut the lead to six with 1:03 left to play.

Taylor called NCCU's last timeout of the game after the made layup. Sophomore Leasha Dixon (Kinston) fouled the visiting Eagle's Amber Griffin out of the huddle, where Griffin knocked down a pair of free throws pushing CSU's lead back to eight followed by a Coppin State timeout.

Conerly dishd the ball back to Freeman out of the timeout as she knocked down a second shot from behind the arc cutting the visiting Eagles advantage to five with 57 seconds left to play.

CSU shot 8-for-8 from the charity stripe down the stretch as they pulled away with the nine-point, 67-58 victory over NCCU.

The Carolina Times

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