

No Thriller In Louisville

Written by Sean Stires

Saturday, 09 March 2013 18:21



Not this time. After playing one of the most thrilling 25 minutes in recent history in last month's five-overtime game in South Bend, the build-up was big going into Saturday's rematch between Notre Dame and Louisville in the Derby City. Last time, Notre Dame rallied at the end of regulation to send the game to OT, but this time the Cardinals prevented the rally to prevail 73-57 in the regular season finale for both teams.

Last time, Notre Dame's top two scorers, Jack Cooley and Jerian Grant, had big games before eventually fouling out, but this time was different. Cooley and Grant, who averaged 12.8 and 14.6 points, respectively, were all but absent in the loss, which prevented the Fighting Irish (23-8, 11-7 Big East) from securing a double-bye in next week's Big East Tournament.

Grant, the hero at the end of regulation of the 5 OT game with 12 points in the final minute, missed his first four shots, all in the first half. He finished with just eight points after his first bucket came with 9:10 remaining in the game. Grant was 2 for 12 from the field, including 1 for 7 from three-point range. He hit 3 of 4 free throws.

Cooley, who also averaged 10.7 rebounds entering the contest, was held to seven points and seven boards in the final regular season game of his career. Cooley was 3 for 9 from the field. Cooley had 11 points and 11 rebounds a month ago today in the win over the Cardinals (26-5, 14-4).

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Sherman, who was the overtime hero in the first meeting between the two teams last month in South Bend, had another big game against the Cardinals. Sherman led the Irish with 14 points on 7 of 10 shooting Saturday after going for 17 points on 7 of 10 - all after regulation had ended - in the five overtime thriller.

Pat Connaughton finished with 13 points. Gorgui Dieng led three Louisville scorers with 20 points and 12 rebounds. Peyton Siva scored 13 for the Cardinals, thanks to three 3-pointers.

As Brey promised earlier in the week, Austin Burgett saw playing time. Burgett has averaged just 2.5 minutes this season, but the freshman from Avon, Ind. saw first half time due to fellow freshman Cameron Biedscheid's suspension from the game for his part in Tuesday's fight against St. John's. Burgett hit 2 of 2 free throws and is 4 for 4 from the line this season.

Louisville had a hard time missing early on. The Irish trailed 25-21 at the 7:03 mark of the first half, despite hitting 8 of 16 shot from the field. Louisville was clicking on all cylinders though, by connecting on 14 of 20 overall (70%) and 4 of 5 three pointers to take an 11-point lead after a 7-0 run.

The Irish struggled down the stretch of the half, hitting just one of their final seven shots from the field to sink to a 39% first half field goal percentage. Louisville wound-up at 66 % (16 of 24) and led 37-27 at the intermission.

Notre Dame trailed 42-29 early in the second half, but an 8-1 run cut the deficit to six to get the Irish right back in it. ND got within five points, but Louisville pushed its lead back up to 13 with seven minutes remaining. The Irish were never able to make up the difference.

The Fighting Irish knew going into the game that all they needed to do was beat Louisville to lock-up the Big East Tourney double-bye, which would have guaranteed them a spot in the tournament quarterfinals. The guarantee was secured when Syracuse lost to regular season Georgetown a couple hours prior to the ND-Louisville tip-off.

Five of the last six and six of the last eight meetings between the two teams, which are both

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headed to the ACC, had gone to overtime.

Louisville will be the No. 2 seed in next week's tournament at Madison Square Garden. Notre Dame and Syracuse close the season tied for fifth place, but the Irish will be the six seed based on Syracuse's 63-47 win over the Irish back on Feb. 4.