

Irish MSG Woes Continue

Written by Sean Stires

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Madison Square Garden continues to be a house of horrors in the regular season for the Notre Dame basketball team. After losing just one of its first 15 games to start the season, the Fighting Irish have now dropped two straight games for the first time this year after a 67-63 loss to St. John's in New York City Tuesday night.

Jack Cooley played through foul trouble and frustration most of the night and was only able to log 18 minutes against the athletic Red Storm (10-7, 2-3 Big East). He finished the night with 10 points and five rebounds in what was Notre Dame's third straight loss to St. John's and their fifth consecutive setback at Madison Square Garden. The Irish (14-3, 2-2) have not won a regular season game at the famous venue since the 2003-2004 season.

Just one point separated the two teams at halftime, as St. John's led 32-31 after the game's first 20 minutes. The Red Storm used a 10-0 run to take a 47-39 lead with about 12:30 remaining. They would extend their lead to 12 points before the Irish used an 18-4 that lasted until 3:15 mark.

The Irish first tied the game at 59-59 on a fast break layup by Grant with 5:05 left in regulation and then took a 61-59 lead 30 when Eric Atkins banked in a shot 30 seconds later.

Atkins led the Irish with a season-high 21 points on 7-of-9 shooting from the floor and going 7-of-8 at the free throw line. Grant, who has made 16 straight free throws after going 4-for-4 at

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the stripe in the game, scored 14. Grant's last miss at the line came against Purdue on Dec. 15 in Indianapolis.

Neither team shot well from long range. Notre Dame was 1-for-9, including an 0-for-4 showing for Cameron Biedscheid. The freshman brought a streak of seven consecutive made threes into the game with him. St. John's was barely better, at 3-for-17 on its 3-point tries.

Notre Dame had won 12 consecutive games prior to Saturday's 65-58 home loss to Connecticut. The last time they lost back-to-back games was against Louisville and Xavier to end last season. The Fighting Irish are now 5-8 all-time against St. John's at Madison Square Garden. They fall to 11-11 vs. the Red Storm since joining the Big East in 1995.

The Irish look to end their slide this Saturday night at Purcell Pavilion against Rutgers. Tip-off is at 8:00 p.m. ET.