

Hoyas Grind Down Irish

Written by Sean Stires

Monday, 21 January 2013 22:45



NOTRE DAME, Ind. – It was ugly. There really is no other way to describe Notre Dame’s 63-47 loss to Georgetown on Monday night at Purcell Pavilion at the Joyce Center. The Irish shot a season-low 34% (17-for-49), while the Hoyas ripped the nets seemingly at will at times at a 53% (24-for-45) clip in the game that saw the Irish playing catch-up all night long.

“That was a thorough beating,” Irish head coach Mike Brey said as he sat down after the lopsided loss. “They really guarded us and I think flustered us with their defense. Anytime we tried to make a little run they made a big shot.”

Georgetown (13-4, 3-3) hit eight of its first 10 shots from the field, while the Irish missed four of their first five shots. Georgetown hit a pair of early three-pointers to jump out to 7-2 and 10-4 leads.

“They started off really hot,” Irish center Jack Cooley said after the game. “When a team shoots like that – when they’re a team that plays defense like they do and shoots like that – you’ve got to match their defensive intensity and we didn’t do that tonight.”

Georgetown used an 11-0 run to go up 21-8. Otto Porter had five points during the run. He scored 10 of Georgetown’s first 17 points and finished the night with a game-high 19 points on 7-of-10 shooting, including 3-for-4 from long range.

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“Tonight, clearly, he was the best player on the floor,” Jerian Grant said of Porter. “He was hitting his threes and then we had to get out on there, but he would drive past us and was posting the smaller guys.”

The Irish (15-4, 3-3) fought their way back to a 25-19 on Jack Cooley’s layup and foul by Mikael Hopkins. Cooley missed the free throw and the Irish would not hit another field goal for the remainder of the half. Georgetown closed the half on a 7-0 run to lead 34-21 after the game’s first 20 minutes. The run extended to 9-0 for a 15-point Hoya lead before Grant, who scored a team-best 13 points, had a five-point burst of his own to get the Irish back within 10 points.

A three-pointer by Connaughton and a layup by Cooley made it a 10-0 team run for the Irish to pull within five with 14:04 to play. Porter silenced the loud Irish crowd though with a three to end the run. Notre Dame continued to claw and knocked the lead down to 40-37 on Connaughton’s reverse layup. Notre Dame would never be that close again.

Notre Dame, a team full of veterans playing a Georgetown squad with a roster that includes nine freshmen or sophomores, was pushed around all night. His team’s lack of physical play had Brey baffled afterward.

“I don’t know,” Brey answered when asked why his team has not played like ‘men’ since their Jan. 8 win at Cincinnati. “I’m disappointed in that. It’s something we’re going to have to address here over the next couple of days. I don’t really have the answer to that.”

Georgetown went on an 18-0 run that lasted an eternal 12:02 on the clock. The Fighting Irish missed 10 consecutive field goals during the Hoya run. The bottom line for the Irish was another night of inconsistent play, especially at the offensive end of the floor.

“We tried to get Jack started inside,” Brey said of what he tried to do to get the offense going. “We were getting post feeds. He’s not finishing some plays, because some length now is bothering him, but we’ve gotta keep going in there and hoping he gets fouled.”

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Cooley ended the night with his 12th double-double of the season with 10 points and 10 rebounds. He was just 4-of-10 from the floor though. Others had much worse nights. Cameron Biedscheid was 0-of-8, including 0-for-5 from behind the three-point line. Scott Martin had another bad night with no points on an 0-for-2 shooting night.

“The knee’s bothering him and that’s something we’re going to have to address,” Brey admitted of Martin’s issue. “I feel for him. He’s trying to give us stuff, but the knee has been an issue. I think it’s affecting all of his phases. We’re going to have to address that over the next couple of days.”

Since going 6-of-7 from three-point range against Seton Hall Scott Martin is 4-for-13 on threes and 6-for-18 with 19 points over Notre Dame’s last five games. The bulk of that came in a 4-for-7 long range night en-route to 12 points in ND’s win over Cincinnati.

Georgetown was the last prior team to hold Notre Dame to fewer than 50 points. The Irish scored just 41 against the Hoyas in a 59-41 loss on Feb. 27 last year.

Things get no easier now. Notre Dame, losers of three of their last four games, plays three of its next four on the road. That starts with Saturday’s noon game at South Florida.

“It has to be a little bit of ‘we’ve got nothing to lose’ with this team now,” Brey said. “I thought we played tight and we played with the weight of the world and sometimes we have here, because we’ve been so good and we’ve been expected to win all the time.”

While the skies are cloudy right now, there is still a lot to play for this season. Brey talked out loud earlier this season both to his team and publicly about the need to win a conference championship this season. He admits that may not be realistic now, but there are still tangible goals to be attained.

“I don’t want to lose sight of the big picture,” Brey said with optimism. “We’re 3-and-3 in the league. We lost badly, but it’s not a bad loss as far as RPI and numbers like that. When you look at the number of (NCAA Tournament) bids our league’s gonna get – I’ve been here before.”

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Let's kind of figure out how we can snatch one of those."

A 3-3 start to Big East play does not mean it's time for the Irish to back the hearse up to Purcell Pavilion. The last three times they have opened with that record they have ended conference play with 13-5, 14-4 and 10-8 marks.