

Bradshaw, second-half surge power Knights to historic postseason win over Army

DAYTONA BEACH, Fla. — As Bellarmine looked to finish off a formidable Army West Point squad in the College Basketball Invitational quarterfinals on Monday night, Pedro Bradshaw passed up a wide-open 3-point attempt in favor of a drive to the hoop.

The junior guard stuck the layup, was fouled and buried his free-throw attempt, tallying three points just the same only the old-fashioned way. That sequence must have been satisfying to Knights Coach Scott Davenport not just because it resulted in crucial points, but because he had discussed the need to play with patience to Bradshaw at halftime.

The All-ASUN honoree took the talk to heart, underscoring a night where things just seemed to sink in for the Knights as a whole at the intermission. They took over after the break at the Ocean Center, commanding the second half en route to a landmark 77-67 win over the Black Knights.

After being accustomed to success in the postseason in Division II, Bellarmine (14-7) earned its first-ever victory in the postseason in the D1 ranks in its inaugural season at the NCAA's highest level.

"I'm very proud of them," Davenport said. "This is another first."

When Bellarmine took the court against Army (12-10), the Knights hadn't played since the ASUN Championships quarterfinals, a layoff of 18 days. Bellarmine hit its first four shots in jumping out to an 8-0 lead, but from there Army controlled the first half, building an 11-point lead late before holding a 40-31 advantage at halftime.

"That might be two of the most disciplined teams in the country," Davenport said of the matchup. "My admiration for (Army) is much larger than just basketball."

Bellarmine has had some thoroughly impressive second halves this season, and Monday evening's ranks among its finest. The Knights shot a blistering 64 percent after the break and limited Army to 31 percent.

"That's the game right there," said Davenport, whose unit outscored the Black Knights 46-27 in the second half. "Also, the discipline we played with in foul trouble was a key to the game."

When junior guard Juston Betz followed a steal by spotting senior guard CJ Fleming for a 3-pointer a little over seven minutes into the second half, Bellarmine had turned a nine-point deficit into a nine-point lead with a devastating 26-8 run to open the stanza.

"We were probably lucky to be down nine," said Davenport, noting Bellarmine's rebounding struggles and Army's controlling of the paint in the first half. "However, not 1 second tonight did anybody lose confidence in each other."

Bradshaw converted a traditional three-point play to boost the advantage to 66-56 with about seven minutes left, and when Bradshaw followed later with the aforementioned old-fashioned three-point play, the Knights led by 12 with approximately three minutes remaining. Army responded to get back within six, but Bradshaw quashed the threat by canning four straight free throws in the final minute.

"He wants it so bad," Davenport said of Bradshaw. "Those free throws down the stretch he shot with such great confidence."

Bradshaw piled up a career-high 31 points and posted a double-double after grabbing 11 rebounds. He consistently worked his way to the charity stripe, shrewdly capitalizing by hitting 14-of-16 attempts.

Fleming drilled five of his seven 3-point chances in registering 17 points. Junior guard Dylan Penn chipped in 13 points.

Bellarmino will meet Pepperdine in the semifinals at 8 p.m. (ET) Tuesday. The Waves defeated Longwood 80-66.

NOTABLES

- Pepperdine played without three potential starters in Sedrick Altman, Kene Chukwuka *and* Jan Zidek, and the Waves had only eight players available.
- Ross passed LMU's Terrell Lowery for fifth place on the WCC's career scoring list. Ross is now at 2,213 points.
- Pepperdine won a CBI game for the first time after suffering first-round losses in 2015 and 2016.
- This was the first-ever meeting between Pepperdine and Longwood.