

Patriots Outlasts Houston in CBI Quarterfinal Overtime Thriller, 88-84

FAIRFAX, Va. - The George Mason men's basketball team jumped out to a double-digit lead and, pushed to the brink, again exploded with a strong open to the overtime period, earning an 88-84 overtime victory over the University of Houston in the quarterfinals of the College Basketball Invitational presented by Buick.

Mason (20-14) will move onto host a semifinal game Wednesday, against an opponent to be determined late Monday night.

Junior Sherrod Wright scored a career-high 29 points, one of four Patriots in double figures, to lead the Mason offense. Junior Jonathan Arledge added 11 points and nine rebounds, while freshman Patrick Holloway added 11 points and junior Bryon Allen had 10. Allen also posted eight rebounds and a game-high nine assists. TaShawn Thomas led the way for Houston (20-13) with 24 points and 17 rebounds.

Mason scored first in the overtime period on a 3-pointer by Wright and would not trail from then on. With their lead squeezed to 84-83 with 68 seconds to play, the Patriots could not score another field goal but converted five of six attempts from the free throw line. The Cougars, meanwhile, did not score another point.

The Patriots jumped out to an overpowering 17-0 lead, holding the Cougars off the scoreboard until the 16:42 mark when Danuel House sank a 3-pointer. Mason went on to lead by as many as 19 after Holloway's 3-pointer at the 12:42 mark left the score 28-9 Patriots. Houston began to whittle away at the lead, closing to within a one-possession game with 50 seconds remaining in the first half on a pair of Thomas free throws.

Mason answered with a Corey Edwards trey and a pair of free throws by freshman Marko Gujanicic to take a 43-36 lead into the halftime locker room.

Mason pushed its lead back out to nine points in the first five minutes of the second half and after Wright sank all three attempts from the charity stripe, the difference moved back to double digits at 64-54 with 9:18 to play. Again, the Cougars worked down the deficit, cutting it to one point at 74-73 with 2:42 to play on a Joseph Young 3-pointer. He added two free throws with 1:24 remaining which gave Houston its first lead of the contest at 75-74.

Less than 30 seconds later, Arledge slammed home a missed basket by Wright to put Mason on top, and Wright hit one of two from the line to make it 77-75. Thomas took a feed from Tione Womack on the other end and dunked the ball, tying the score at 77. The Patriots had a layup attempt and a 3-pointer attempt by Allen in the closing seconds, but with both off the mark, the teams went to overtime.

