

Patriots Move Past Western Michigan Into CBI Finals, 62-52

FAIRFAX, Va. - Junior Jonathan Arledge scored a career-high 23 points, leading the George Mason men's basketball team past Western Michigan, 62-52, and into the College Basketball Invitational presented by Buick finals. The best-of-three series begins Monday, April 1, with opponent, location and game time to be determined.

Mason improved to 21-14 with the victory, while the Broncos closed out their season at 22-13.

Arledge was the lone Patriot in double-digit scoring, including an 8-for-8 mark at the free throw line. He also tied teammate Erik Copes for a team-high five rebounds, while junior Bryon Allen dished a game-high seven assists. David Brown led a trio of WMU double figure scorers with 13 points.

Unlike the previous game, the Patriots fell behind early as the visiting Broncos raced out to nine-point lead in the first nine minutes of play. Up 17-9 after a Brandon Pokley jumper at the 11:23 mark, WMU saw its lead disappear thanks to an 18-0 run by the Patriots. Mason held the Broncos off the scoreboard for more than nine minutes, as the Green and Gold took a 26-17 lead into the final three minutes of the half.

Western Michigan cut it to a six point game behind a Connor Tava layup and a Brown free throw, but Mason's Paris Bennett hit one of two at the stripe to set the halftime score of 27-20. Arledge scored nearly half his total in the first half, contributing 11 points as both teams shot in the thirties from the field. Austin Richie led the Broncos in the opening period with eight points.

Mason took its largest lead out of the intermission with an Arledge 3-pointer and a Copes layup, making the score 32-20 with just over a minute expired. A Shayne Whittington dunk and a Pokley trey pulled the Broncos to within seven at 32-25, but the WMU comeback effort essentially stalled for the next 10 minutes.

Mason would lead by as many as 14 at 47-33 before seven in a row by the Broncos cut the margin to 47-40 with five minutes to play. The seven-point difference would again be as close as the visitors could get, as the Patriots answered with seven in a row and did not see their advantage threatened in the final minutes.

Sherrod Wright tied a school-record with his 35th start of the season tonight, matching the mark set by Lamar Butler and Will Thomas during the Patriots' NCAA Final Four season of 2005-06.

