

Loyola Grinds Past Seattle To Reach CBI Championship Series

CHICAGO - Earl Peterson scored all of his team-high 15 points in the second half, including six in a game-changing, 14-0, second-half run, to propel Loyola to a 63-48 win over Seattle tonight in the semifinals of the College Basketball Invitational (CBI) at Gentile Arena. The Ramblers improve to 22-13, their most wins since posting 27 victories during their Sweet 16 run in 1985, and will take on Louisiana-Monroe in a best-of-three championship series. Seattle's season ends with an 18-16 record.

Loyola got off to a hot start, using three-pointers from Devon Turk and Ben Richardson and an alley-oop dunk from Donte Ingram to take an 8-2 lead after five minutes. However, Seattle was able to inch back into the game as both teams started to show the effects of playing on Monday night. Two Jarell Flora free throws capped a 12-5 run over a nine-minute span to give the Redhawks a 14-13 lead. Another Richardson trey and a Christian Thomas bucket gave Loyola the lead back but Seattle finished the half strong, scoring seven of the last nine points to take a 21-20 lead into halftime. Loyola shot just 33% in the half but forced 13 SU turnovers.

Two Jack Crook baskets early in the second half helped Seattle open up a four-point lead but a three-pointer from Milton Doyle and a Peterson basket gave the Ramblers the lead back. Six consecutive Seattle points helped the visitors to its largest lead of the night (34-29) at the 12:15 mark but, again, Loyola had an answer and back-to-back threes from Turk capped an 8-0 run that gave the hosts a two-point lead. A Manny Chibuogwu free throw put the Redhawks on top, 42-40, with 5:51 left before Loyola turned up the intensity. Baskets from Peterson and Doyle put the Ramblers back on top and Peterson added a pair from the line and another bucket to make it a 48-42 lead at the final media timeout.

Loyola missed the front-end of a one-and-one coming out of that timeout but Montel James grabbed the rebound, was fouled and hit two free throws to make it an eight-point lead. A turnover led to a James basket in transition and a defensive stop yielding a Doyle fast-break hoop to cap the run, which ended with Loyola enjoying a 54-42 lead at the 2:01 mark, and Seattle would get no closer than 10 points the rest of the way.

The Ramblers' defense was outstanding all night, limiting Seattle to 40% shooting for the game while forcing 22 turnovers. In addition, Loyola held SU's top two scorers, Isiah Umipig and Flora, to just eight total points after they combined to average 31.4 ppg in the Redhawks' first 33 games.

Peterson was outstanding in the second half, finishing the night 4-of-8 from the floor and 7-of-8 from the line en route to his 15 points. Turk buried five triples and added 15 points and six rebounds of his own. Doyle added nine points and four steals while Richardson and Thomas pitched in with eight points apiece.

Loyola opens the championship series on Monday night (March 30) at Gentile Arena. Tip-off is scheduled for 7 p.m. The series shifts to Monroe for game two on Wednesday night with the decisive game three, if necessary, set for Friday night.

