

Loyola Rallies Past Louisiana-Monroe To Claim CBI Title, 63-62

MONROE, La. - Visiting Loyola made the most of the program's first-ever April game, rallying from a four-point deficit with less than five minutes left to win the College Basketball Invitational title with a 63-62 win over Louisiana-Monroe tonight in Monroe, La. The win gives the Ramblers a 2-0 sweep of the championship series and they end their most successful season since 1985 with a 24-13 record, a ledger that includes winning eight of their last nine games. ULM's season ends with a 24-14 record. Earl Peterson, who averaged 14 points per game in the championship series, was named CBI Most Valuable Player.

In a back-and-forth game, Loyola made some big plays down the stretch. Trailing by four after two ULM free throws, Devon Turk buried a wing three-pointer to make it a one-point game, Milton Doyle followed with a jumper and a Jeff White steal led to two Doyle free throws to give the Ramblers a 61-58 lead at the 2:59 mark. The Warhawks answered with a pair at the line but Doyle found Christian Thomas for a tough bucket inside to bump the lead back to three with 1:12 left. Tough Loyola defense forced a miss but the Ramblers could not convert, leaving it a 63-60 game with 21 seconds left. The Ramblers elected to foul with three seconds left and Jamaal Samuels missed the front-end of a one-and-one but ULM got the board and scored to cut their deficit to one. Peterson was fouled with :01.6 left, missed his free throw but ULM was out of timeouts and could not get a shot off.

The dramatics at the end came on the heels of a competitive game. A three-point play from Majok Deng gave ULM an 11-7 lead but five straight Loyola points later, four from Montel James, gave the Ramblers a 14-12 lead. The Warhawks kept pushing and opened up a five-point lead before Loyola rallied again. Turk answered with a triple, the 205th of his career to break Blake Schilb's school record, and White fed Peterson for a dunk to draw the Ramblers even at 25. A late three-pointer from Donte Ingram gave LU a two-point lead late but Nick Coppola scored in the lane in the waning seconds to send the teams to the locker room tied at 33.

After Thomas opened the second half scoring with a free throw, ULM got hot from the arc. Three consecutive three-pointers highlighted a 13-4 spurt that gave the home team a 46-38 lead with 16:31 to play. A big three-point play from Doyle helped the Ramblers stem the tide and two Thomas free throws made it a 47-45 game with just over 13 minutes left. Every time Loyola made a charge, ULM answered until the Ramblers took control with their late run.

For the second consecutive game, Loyola shot over 50%, hitting at a 54.5% clip against one of the nation's top-10 field-goal percentage defenses. The Ramblers put four in double figures, led by Turk's 14 points (4-9 3FGs). Doyle finished with 13 points and four assists while Peterson added 12 and James, who was playing in his home state, added 10. In his final game in the Maroon and Gold, Thomas finished with nine points, all in the second half.

The Ramblers lose three seniors to graduation - Thomas, Joe Crisman and London Dokubo.

