

ULM Advances to CBI Championship Series with 71-65 Win over Vermont

MONROE, La. – Down by two at half, the ULM men's basketball program clamped down defensively and got some big buckets to go down in the second half as it defeated Vermont, 71-65 in the CenturyLink College Basketball Invitational (CBI) Semifinals on Wednesday at Fant-Ewing Coliseum.

Junior Majok Deng poured in a career-high 22 points for ULM (24-12) and also grabbed 11 rebounds for his second consecutive double-double. Senior Tylor Ongwae continued his tear in the CBI with 22 points, marking his third straight 20-plus scoring game.

Junior Jamaal Samuel also aided the attack with 14 points. He was a perfect 5-5 at the free throw line, while Ongwae was 6-6 and Deng 6-7.

Ethan O'Day led Vermont (20-14) with 16 points and seven rebounds. Dre Wills and Kurt Steidl put in 11 points apiece.

Ongwae got off to a hot start and scored an early seven points to give ULM a 9-3 edge. After Vermont scored the next three points, the Warhawks answered with an 11-0 spurt which included a three-point play and jumper from Samuel to go up 20-6 at the 13:51 mark.

The Catamounts used a 14-4 run to get back in it, 24-20, as ULM called timeout with 8:12 remaining. After the Warhawks went back up 32-24, Vermont came back with an 11-0 run to take the lead, 35-32 with 1:21 to go. Sophomore Nick Coppola hit a free throw to make it a 35-33 game at the break.

Vermont opened the second half on a 7-2 run to take its biggest lead of the game, 42-35. ULM quickly responded with a 9-0 spurt, which included five points from Deng to take the lead, 44-42 at the 16:12 mark.

After the Catamounts scored the next basket, ULM reeled off eight straight points, which included four from Samuel, to go up 52-44 with 12:20 left. The Warhawks extended the lead to 59-48 after Ongwae converted an old-fashion three-point play with 8:14 remaining.

Still on top 61-51, Vermont went on a 5-0 run capped by a three-pointer by Cam Ward to make it a 61-56 game with 5:07 to go. Deng answered with a lay-up and a free to go push the advantage back up to eight with 3:39 left.

The Catamounts would not go away and came back with layups from O'Day and Ward to cut the deficit to 64-60 at the 2:50 mark.

ULM responded with a decisive 5-0 run, all scored by Ongwae, including a three-pointer for the dagger with 1:22 remaining to make it a 69-60 game.

The Warhawks advanced to the CBI Championship series. They will travel to Loyola-Chicago on Monday in game one of a best of three series. Games two and three (if necessary) will be played at Fant-Ewing Coliseum next Wednesday and Friday. Start times are to be announced.