

Jackson hits game-winner, Miners advance in CBI

RENO, Nev. – Stefon Jackson hit a jumper to the right of the lane with 4.4 seconds left, giving UTEP a 79-77 win at Nevada in the opening round of the College Basketball Invitational (CBI) on Tuesday in Reno.

Jackson propelled the Miners into the quarterfinals of the tournament, scoring 26 points. UTEP will face Northeastern (19-12) on Monday at a to be determined site. Northeastern won at Wyoming, 64-62, on Tuesday as Matt Janning scored 20 points.

UTEP (20-12) has secured a 2-0win season for the 22nd time in school history, and the first time since 2006.

The Miners jumped on the Wolf Pack (21-13) early, scoring the game's first four points and building a 24-14 lead with 9:20 remaining in the first half.

"We did what we wanted to do. We had to start quickly and take the crowd out of the game," UTEP coach Tony Barbee said. "We also wanted to dare them to take three pointers because neither team is a great perimeter shooting team."

UTEP took its largest lead of the game at 37-24 on a three-pointer by Jackson with 5:02 left in the half before Nevada rallied to close the gap to 46-43 at the midway point.

After Luke Babbitt scored a layup 11 seconds into the second half to pull Nevada within a point (46-45), the Miners reeled off nine straight points to reinstate a double-digit margin (55-45). UTEP still led 73-63 with seven minutes to play before the Wolf Pack went on a 14-4 run, capped by a three-pointer by Armon Johnson which tied the game at 77 with eight seconds to play.

Jackson made 10-of-18 shots and tied his career high with four three-point field goals.

No shot, however, was bigger than his game-winning bucket.

"Who has a better midrange game in the country?" Barbee asked. "He has been clutch all season. I'm happy for Stefon to be able to continue his college career, and for the young guys, let's take this opportunity to build momentum for next year."

Randy Culpepper scored 16 points for the Miners and Arnett Moultrie had 13 points and seven rebounds. Moultrie also did a fine job holding the Wolf Pack's leading scorer, Babbitt, in check. He scored 20 points but was 4-for-14 from the floor.

UTEP shot 47.6 percent from the field and made 11-of-22 three-point attempts.

UTEP has now won five straight games on Nevada's home floor, including a three-game run to the WAC Championship in 2005.