

## **Rozzell, Rams Capture CBI Championship**

**ST. LOUIS, Mo.** – Prior to Wednesday's game against Saint Louis, the VCUy watched numerous clips of boxing great Mike Tyson delivering mammoth knockout punches.

It may have taken the Rams all 13 rounds, but the Black & Gold came through with their knockout punch in a 71-65 win over the Billikens to capture the 2010 College Basketball Invitational Championship.

VCU is one of four teams out of 374 Division I schools that will finish the 2009-10 season with a win and tallied the second-most wins in school history with a 27-9 mark.

"I can't tell you how proud I am of this team," Head Coach Shaka Smart said. "I can go individually through the whole team, but that would take all night. The way this team came together during this tournament and grew was phenomenal. The second half tonight was a great exhibit in exactly that, showing resolve and toughness in a difficult environment."

Junior Brandon Rozzell was the go-to guy on the evening, pouring in a game-high 27 points on 8of12 shooting and 4of7 from long distance. Classmate Jamie Skeen finished with 16 points, while Joey Rodriguez tallied 13 points on his way to capturing Tournament MVP honors.

The Billikens showed early why they went 18-3 in Chafietz Arena, jumping out to a 9-0 start in the first three minutes.

Skeen would muscle his way inside and ignite a 20-7 VCU run as the Rams held a four-point advantage with just over 10 minutes left in the stanza.

Ten first-half turnovers would quickly change that lead and allow Willie Reed to score seven firsthalf points to help Saint Louis take control of the game and hold a 33-24 lead at the break.

The Black & Gold started to chip away at the lead in the second half, keeping within three points for the last 14 minutes and grabbed their first lead since the early in the first half on a three-pointer by Rodriguez with 6:58 to play.

"Late in the game, we made an adjustment to switch on their ball screens instead of trying to run through them," Smart said. "I really think that disrupted their rhythm and our guards did a great job talking and working through those screens."

That defense proved to be the difference down the stretch, holding Saint Louis to just two field goals in the final five minutes, while Skeen had to huge buckets and Rozzell went 4-of-4 from the line to secure an undefeated run to the CBI Championship.

Entering the game, Rozzell was averaging just 5.1 points per game and shooting just 33.3% from the field in road games this year. His 27 points on the night was seven better than his previous career-high of 20 points and his eight field goals were also a career-high.