

Washington Guides Cowboys Past NDSU, 78-75, in CBI First Round

LARAMIE, Wyo. – Redshirt junior forward Leonard Washington posted 22 points and 11 rebounds and the University of Wyoming men's basketball team used late free throws to earn a 78-75 win over North Dakota State in the first round of the CBI presented by Zebra Pen on Wednesday night in the Arena Auditorium.

UW (21-11) allowed its most points this season, but three Cowboys scored in doubles figures to give the Pokes their first postseason win since 2003.

"We didn't guard as well as I would have liked, and we turned it over too much, but I told the guys in the locker room after the game that I will never complain about a win," UW head coach Larry Shyatt said. "I want to give North Dakota State credit for playing a good offensive game. They have a good young team."

The Cowboys led by as many as 10 points halfway through the second half, but the Bison (17-14) hung tough and clawed back within one at 67-66 with five minutes left. UW extended the lead back to seven with 2:57 to go, but NDSU cut it to a one possession game over the final minute and banked in a three with three seconds left. Redshirt junior Luke Martinez made two free throws on the ensuing UW possession and NDSU's long three-point attempt to tie the game sailed wide.

Washington posted his fourth double-double in UW's last five contests and added two blocks, while senior guard Francisco Cruz scored 15 points and senior center Adam Waddell contributed 13 points and a block. Martinez scored nine points and grabbed a career-high 10 rebounds, while senior guard JayDee Luster handed out six assists.

It was an offensive night for both squads, as Wyoming allowed its most points this season, but scored its second most of the year. The Cowboys hit 53 percent (22-of-41) from the field, including 26 percent (5-of-19) from deep, to 47 percent (27-of-57) and 41 percent (7-of-17) for North Dakota State. UW earned a 34-28 advantage in rebounds, while both teams notched 11 assists.

It was a game of runs through the first half, as the Cowboys led by as many as seven and the Bison fought in front by as much as four. There were six lead changes and four ties in the first half. NDSU started 4-of-6 from the field to go up 9-5 through the first three minutes, but UW used a quick 7-0 spurt thanks to two baskets from Waddell to retake the lead. The Cowboys slowly built their advantage to seven at 20-13 midway through the half.

The squads exchanged baskets over the next few minutes until the Bison crafted a 13-2 run to go back in front 32-28 with 4:28 left. Freshman forward Larry Nance Jr. responded for the Pokes with eight-straight points to push the Pokes in front again and Waddell hit two free throws with 10 seconds left to tie the contest at 37-37 headed in halftime. Washington had 10 points in the first half and Nance added eight, while Martinez scored seven points and grabbed six rebounds.

Both teams shot well in the first half, as the Pokes hit 55 percent (11-of-20) from the field and the Bison connected on 51 percent (15-of-29). NDSU shot 44 percent (4-of-9) from deep to 27 percent (3-of-11) for Wyoming, but the Cowboys grabbed a 16-11 rebounding advantage.

The Pokes started the second half with a 12-2 run to go up by 10 at 54-44 four minutes in. Washington and Waddell combined for nine of the points during the run and senior guard Arthur Bouedo capped it with a trey. Wyoming maintained the lead until the midpoint of the half, when NDSU went on a 10-3 spurt to tie the contest 61-61 with 7:36 to go. The Cowboys battled back in front by two baskets, but the Bison once again fought to within one at 67-66 with 4:53 left. UW etched out a seven-point lead, but NDSU hung around and cut the lead to 76-75 with three seconds left. Martinez hit two free throws with two seconds to go and NDSU's three-point attempt to tie the game went wide.