

Notre Dame uses 13-0 run to pull away from Duquesne, 67-56

By Anthony Anderson

SOUTH BEND, Ind. (AP) — After losing one of its captains to a transfer request early Tuesday, Notre Dame appeared like it might also lose on its home court, but a ferocious response down the stretch lifted the Irish to a 67-56 win over Duquesne in the Gotham Classic Showcase Game.

John Mooney scored 16 points and grabbed 10 rebounds, and freshman Prentiss Hubb added 14 points as Notre Dame improved to 4-1. Junior TJ Gibbs chipped in 11.

Trailing 52-51 at 7:09 to go, the Irish went on a 13-0 spree over the next six minutes to take control at 64-52 with 1:19 remaining

"I really think it comes down to the defensive end," said Rex Pflueger, who contributed four points and a drawn charge to the run for Notre Dame. "That's what gets our offense going. It really gives us more energy when (we) see our guys taking charges ... That carries over to the offensive end from a confidence standpoint, and I think that's why we were able to get that run going."

"I thought our defense again was excellent," Notre Dame coach Mike Brey said, whose team has not given up more than 67 points in a game this season. "We (had) nine straight stops to get out of there." The win came after Notre Dame announced Tuesday morning that junior tri-captain Elijah Burns would be granted an in-season transfer request.

Burns, a 6-foot-8 forward who was averaging 5.3 points and 3.8 rebounds in 11.3 minutes per outing, could be eligible to play at another school by Jan. 1, given that he's scheduled to graduate from Notre Dame in December.

Brey said Notre Dame would not block such a waiver request.

"Now they're more minutes to go around," Burns said. "We are committed to a youth movement. It is a youth movement."

The Irish denied a likewise youthful Duquesne club (3-1) its first 4-0 start in nine years.

Tavian Dunn-Martin led the Dukes with 14 points. Fellow sophomore Michael Hughes added 10.

Sophomore Eric Williams Jr. and freshman Sincere Carry, who went into the game averaging a combined 30.3 points, were held to five, all by Williams, and shot a combined 1 of 16 from the field.

"I thought Eric had open looks in the first half, and Sincere just never got it going, so we went a different direction," Duquesne coach Keith Dambrot said. "Obviously, you game plan to take guys away and Pflueger's a good defensive player, but Eric had some open looks. They played some zone, too, but we're not going to win many games when Eric goes 1 for 11. No team is going to win when their best player does that."

BIG PICTURE

Notre Dame: On a roster clogged by an array of players who have been earning regular action — 10 players averaging 11 or more minutes each — the subtraction of Burns gives the Irish fewer combinations to consider, and it is getting more pivotal to establish consistent top options as the schedule toughens.

The Irish's next five opponents are DePaul (3-0), Illinois (1-3), Oklahoma (3-0), No. 17 UCLA (4-0) and No. 24 Purdue (4-1). The last three are all on the road.

Duquesne: The Dukes lost the first of just three chances they'll get this season against Power Five programs. The others come in the next month against Pittsburgh and Penn State.

NO BRIDGES BURNED

Pflueger said the Irish don't harbor any hard feelings toward Burns for his departure.

"He realizes it's his time (to) go," said Pflueger, a fellow tri-captain along with Gibbs. "It's nothing personal against the team, against the coach or anything. He just thought it would be for the best if he left, not only for himself, but for the team as well."

Burns played just 16 minutes over his final two games and did not score.

"As much as it hurts having him gone," said Pflueger, who called Burns one of the most mature human beings he knows, "we've got to keep moving forward as a team, and we did a great job tonight taking that first step."

Brey acknowledged that declining playing time triggered Burns' departure.

"When I can't (give) the role the guy wants, then everybody should move in a different direction," Brey said, adding that Burns told him he "didn't want to be a bad influence on the team" by remaining on board when his "head wasn't in it."

UP NEXT

Notre Dame: The Irish host DePaul on Saturday in the second-to-last of seven straight home games.

Duquesne: The Dukes begin a staggering streak of nine straight games within the city of Pittsburgh when they host UMass Lowell on Sunday.