

No.20 UNC Routs ETSU

Written by Staff Reports

Sunday, 09 December 2012 07:48

No. 20 North Carolina has had plenty of huge halftime leads at home through the years. But this one was something new for the Tar Heels. The Tar Heels gave up just 12 first-half points to East Tennessee State on Saturday night and went on to a 78-55 victory over the Buccaneers. Leslie McDonald scored 14 points and

freshman Brice Johnson added 12 points for the Tar Heels (7-2), who shot 42.9 percent and used a 34-2 run to put the overmatched Buccaneers out of this one early, needing only about 15 minutes to go up by 30. It was inconsequential that ETSU actually outscored North Carolina 43-36 in the final 20 minutes - except, of course, to perfectionist coach Roy Williams.

"I don't like to say this, but we couldn't maintain that type of intensity in the second half," Williams said.

They didn't need to. Not with their opponent setting a record for the fewest points in a half at the nearly 27-year-old Smith Center. Rashawn Rembert scored a career-high 18 points. Lester Wilson added 13 points on 5-of-19 shooting with 11 rebounds for ETSU (2-5), but freshman guard Mario Stramaglia had seven turnovers in his first start. Rembert and Stramaglia filled in at the point for injured starter Petey McClain.

"You're really putting (Rembert and Stramaglia) in a tough position, a position, really, to fail, but it's the only thing we can do," coach Murray Bartow said. "I thought we left them hung out to dry some, kind of left them on an island some."

Reggie Bullock added 10 points for the Tar Heels, who won their second straight since an ugly loss at No. 1 Indiana. UNC had this past week off for final exams, but the Tar Heels sure didn't get much of a test from the Buccaneers. North Carolina forced 22 turnovers and finished with a season-high 30 assists on its 31 field goals. Its only unassisted basket came when McDonald blew an alley-oop dunk from P.J. Hairston but pulled down his miss and put it in.

"I'm a vet, so if they say something about it, they're going to have to deal with me," McDonald said with a laugh.

During a stretch of roughly 14 minutes in the first half, the Tar Heels held ETSU to 1-of-17 shooting. Point guard Marcus Paige, who missed last week's victory over UAB with a jammed left shoulder, was back in the starting lineup and had a season-high seven assists in 21 minutes. And fellow freshman Joel James made his second straight appearance as the fifth starter, though Williams indicated that spot remains unsettled "because I'm not sold on anybody." James' first start came during that 102-84 win over the Blazers in which the Tar Heels weren't terribly happy to be trading baskets with them all night.

That wasn't a problem at all in this one. North Carolina reeled off 15 straight points and, later, 19 in a row during the overwhelming run that gave it that 30-point cushion.

Among the high points: the Tar Heels hit 3-pointers on three straight possessions - two by McDonald, one by Hairston - to get things started. Johnson had highlight-reel dunks on back-to-back trips down the court, including a pretty alley-oop from McDonald that made it 41-9 with about 2½ minutes left.

By then, the only thing in question was whether the mistake-prone Buccaneers could scrape together enough offense to get to 13 points - the previous mark for scoring futility in a half in this building. When Rembert tossed up an air ball just before the halftime buzzer, that left it 42-12 at

No.20 UNC Routs ETSU

Written by Staff Reports

Sunday, 09 December 2012 07:48

halftime - wiping N.C. State's dubious accomplishment in 2008 from the arena's record book. Hunter Harris finished with 11 points for ETSU.

Photo Courtesy: Leslie McDonald, UNC Athletics