

Bulldogs push Gamecocks to limit as they end familiar early season slate

Written by Levi Johnson, Sports Editor
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Culminating a long, grueling and familiar early season schedule that included play against eight major Division I opponents, South Carolina State (4-9) entered Colonial Life Arena (CLA) Sat. afternoon (Jan. 5) hardly unbowed.

And after pushing host South Carolina to the limit in front of 7,394 onlookers, Tim Carter's traveling Bulldogs left CLA hardly as a giving in group.

Displaying the heart of a champion for a major portion of the duel opposite the bigger and deeper Gamecocks, the Bulldogs with less activity on the defensive side of the ball, during the last 8 1/2 minutes of play subsequently was outpointed by 11 (80-69), by the home players, who apparently knew their foes were legitimate competitors on the fifth day of the new year.

Competing with a sense of pride that was anchored in the strong play of junior forward Matthew Hezekiah and junior guard Adama "Louis" Adams, the visitors from nearby Orangeburg never let their major foes run away from them, during the early year face-off. Hezekiah finished the day as the leading scorer of the game with his 24 point effort. He also grabbed 14 rebounds. Adams, sinking eight for eight from the free throw line, chipped in 12 while freshman guard Patrick Myers added 9 for the Bulldogs.

The proceedings at the above mentioned venue showcased a S.C. State team that displayed a lot of talent and toughness on both ends of the court. However, on the heels of the 11-point setback, Tim Carter cited the youth of his Bulldogs as a factor in the outcome of the contest.

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"I'd say we did press ourselves a little when we had chances on the offensive end to keep coming after them; (especially late in the second half, when it was still undecided). But that's what young teams do (in that kind of situation)," said the SCSU coach, now in his sixth year at the helm of the Bulldogs cage program. "We just have to learn how to make the plays when we have to have them.

"But, I can't fault the effort of my team; especially because of the tough schedule we've been playing to open our season. I'm not making excuses; we just have to learn how to do the fundamental things to help us win."

While giving credit to his participants for winning their 10th game out of 13 starts, which equals the South Carolina total during the 2011-2012 campaign, Frank Martin, also, praised Tim Carter and his Bulldogs.

"I've been where they are. I know what it's like to be there; so you have to give South Carolina State a lot of credit, after being on the road as long as they have; and coming in here playing with the energy they had," the Gamecocks first year mentor said.

"But give credit to my players, too. We had a slow start; and some of that was due to their (more) active play with the zone defenses. Lack of rhythm (at that time) bothered us, too." The Gamecocks scoring was paced by Lakeem Jackson with 16 and Brian Richardson, who contributed 15.

As to whether his Gamecocks are ready for upcoming Southeastern Conference (SEC) action, which gets underway this Saturday (Jan. 12) versus Auburn, at CLA, Martin offered the following words.

"I guess we're going to find out," the South Carolina hoops helmsman said.