



UIS men finally find chemistry for victory

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With less than 48 hours remaining in the season, the University of Illinois Springfield played one of its best stretches of basketball Thursday night against the Wisconsin-Parkside Rangers in a Great Lakes Valley Conference men's game.

The Stars were unstoppable early, then held on for an 85-79 victory at The Recreation and Athletic Center.

"Different guys stepped up," UIS coach Ben Wierzba said. "That's what I've been trying to preach the whole time. It's a team. It's all 10 guys in the locker room. To see them get rewarded is joyful. They deserved the reward they got tonight."

UIS dominated the first half and was ahead 43-31 at halftime, but the Rangers rallied in the second half. A pair of free throws by Parkside junior Leneal Harris, who rang up 29 points, cut the Stars' lead to 74-73 with two minutes to go.

Steffen Spink's 3-pointer gave UIS a four-point cushion with 1½ minutes remaining. Chigozie Umeadi stretched the Stars' lead to 79-74 with 37.6 seconds left on the clock.

Jermaine Love-Roberts and Brandon Farmer helped sealed the win by making their free throws in the final seconds. UIS led from start to finish. It took a total team effort to secure the victory.

Love-Roberts scored a team-high 21 points for the Stars and added nine rebounds. Farmer added 11 assists. Teammate Lester Hart chipped in 19 points. UIS junior Michael Fakuade finished with 14 points, 14 rebounds and three blocks.

The Stars (7-17 overall, 3-14 in the GLVC) struggled to finish.

UIS jumped out to an 11-0 lead, then extended it to 27-11 at the 10:19 mark.

"They worked hard and they set the tone right in the first 10 minutes," Wierzba said. "Those 10 minutes we were aggressive and flying around. That first 10 minutes was about the best 10 minutes we've played as a group.

"I was proud of the guys that they could come out like that."

In the opening half, UIS led by as many as 20 points.

"We were able to get out, pressure the ball, and really get in the passing lanes, get some steals and get out in the open court," Umeadi said. "I feel that's when we are at our best."

Parkside (8-17, 5-12) started chipping away at the Stars' lead a few minutes before halftime.

"We didn't turn the ball over nearly as much in the second half," Parkside coach Luke Reigel said. "In the first half when we got shots, we scored. But, they forced a lot of turnovers and play extremely hard. We weren't tough enough to handle it."

The game was briefly delayed in the closing seconds after Umeadi and Hart collided on the court. Umeadi immediately walked to the bench and a trainer tended to a gash on his forehead. Hart was hit in the mouth and was on the ground for many minutes before walking to the bench.

UIS plays Lewis in the season finale at 3 p.m. Saturday at TRAC.

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