

## Simmons scores 22 as No. 23 LSU downs Kennesaw State

**BATON ROUGE, La. (AP)** - Freshman sensation Ben Simmons is getting a feel for his new teammates and how he fits in at LSU.

In LSU's season-opening victory against McNeese State, he took just seven shots while scoring 11 points. He was far more aggressive in his second game.

Simmons scored 22 points and Josh Gray returned from a one-game suspension to score 16 points as No. 23 LSU beat Kennesaw State 91-69 Monday night in a regional round of the Legends Classic.

"I realized I only took seven shots last game and I was shocked about that," Simmons said. "I didn't really need to because Antonio (Blakeney) and Brandon (Sampson) were making shots. I just have to do what I have to do and play my role."

The preseason All-American shot 11 for 17 from the field, had nine rebounds, six assists, four steals and two blocked shots. Simmons did not commit a turnover in 31 minutes.

Gray was suspended for the McNeese game for his participation in an unsanctioned summer league game. Antonio Blakeney had 14 points and Aaron Epps had a career-high 10 points for LSU (2-0).

Kendrick Ray was the leading scorer for Kennesaw (0-2) with 25 points. Nigel Pruitt had 15 points, while Yonel Brown scored 11. The Owls shot just 38 percent from the field (24 of 64) and committed 17 turnovers.

The Tigers scored 22 points off those 17 turnovers.

"As the game went on, we were able to wear them down a little bit," LSU coach Johnny Jones said. "Our guys did a good job of executing and making plays. We took care of the basketball and had several assists. Our scoring attack was balanced again."

LSU took control of the game with a smothering defense over the final 11-plus minutes of the first half. Pruitt's basket pulled Kennesaw State to 16-15 with 11:53 remaining before halftime, but the Owls made only one shot the rest of the half.

Kennesaw missed 13 of 14 shot attempts during that stretch and committed 12 turnovers. The only basket was a layup by Bernard Morena with 9:48 remaining in the half. The Owls didn't score again until Ray made two free throws with 2:27 before halftime.

Simmons had 14 points and three assists, and Blakeney added 11 points as the Tigers built a 44-21 halftime lead.

"We didn't execute well in the first half and we got rattled," Kennesaw coach Al Skinner said. "We can't afford to get as distracted as we did. We knew it was going to be a tough game coming in here, but I expected us to play a little better than we did."

Kennesaw scored the first seven points of the second half on a 3-pointer by Nick Masterson and baskets by Jordan Jones and Ray. But, the Owls would come no closer than 16 points the rest of the way.

Two 3-pointers by Tim Quarterman helped LSU go ahead 56-33 with 15:34 remaining. Three baskets by Simmons put the Tigers on top 66-37 about 3 minutes later.