

Bucknell Opens TicketCity Legends Classic with 62-56 Win over Princeton

Muscala Leads Bison with 25 Points, 12 Rebounds

[box score](#)

LEWISBURG, Pa. - Mike Muscala piled up 25 points and 12 rebounds, and Bucknell turned in a stellar defensive effort in a 62-56 victory over Princeton on Friday on the opening night of the TicketCity Legends Classic at Sojka Pavilion. With the help of a big lift from freshman point guard Steven Kasparin the second half, the Bison won their third straight game to improve to 3-2 on the season.

With Muscala shooting 8-for-10 from both the field and the free-throw line, Bucknell earned its first victory over Princeton since 1996, snapping a five-game losing streak to the defending Ivy League champions. It was Bucknell's first home victory over the Tigers since 1985.

Friday's contest was a defensive struggle for most of the night. The two teams traded big runs early - a 10-0 Bison spurt was countered by a 13-0 Princeton run - and after three ties and three lead changes Bucknell took a 25-24 lead at the half.

With the game tied at 29 early in the second half, the Bison endured six straight empty offensive possessions, but they only allowed four points in that five-minute stretch to keep the game within reach, and then Muscala and Kaspar took the game over in crunch time.

Down 33-29, Muscala scored on a low-post move and then hit two free throws to tie the game. On the next possession Muscala swished a 3-pointer from the top of the key to make it 36-33, and Bucknell led for the final 12:54.

After Bryson Johnson drew a charge on John Comfort, Kaspar slashed through the line for a layup. Ian Hummer scored for Princeton, and then Kaspar again got all the way to the rim. This time the shot rimmed out, but Willman was there for the tip-in.

With Bucknell leading 52-46 inside three minutes to play, Kaspar drove the lane for yet another layup, and after Willman swatted Brendan Connolly's shot at the other end, Kaspar corralled the long rebound, went off to the races and rattled in a short bank shot over a Princeton defender to give Bucknell a commanding 56-46 lead with 2:16 to play.

Things got a bit interesting in the final minutes when the Bison left the door open with some missed free throws and a turnover in the backcourt against full-court pressure. The Tigers crept within five on a couple of occasions and had a possession to get even closer with 40 seconds to play, but Muscala intercepted a pass and then made both free throws to seal the win.

Kaspar finished with eight points and did not turn the ball over in 25 minutes of action. The stat sheet lists him with only one assist, but his penetration caused havoc for Princeton, and three times he made nice dishes that put a teammate on the free-throw line.

Muscala's double-double was his third of the season and 11th of his career. Willman tallied nine points, five rebounds, four assists and three blocked shots. Bryan Cohen chipped in seven points, and Cameron Ayers and Brian Fitzpatrick added five apiece.

Bucknell shot 48.9 percent for the game, including 57.1 percent in the second half, and outscored the Tigers 36-14 in the paint.

Defensively, Bucknell limited Princeton to 37.3 percent shooting and outrebounded the Tigers 34-27. While the Bison only attempted six 3-pointers all night, making two, Princeton took a whopping 32 of its 51 shots from outside the arc. The Tigers made nine of those threes, including three straight first-half treys from Comfort, who had played only three minutes without attempting a shot this season coming in.

Ian Hummer led Princeton with 13 points - four below his team-leading scoring average - and 10 rebounds. Comfort finished with a career-high 11 points and Ben Hazel a career-high 10, but the Bison shut down talented senior point guard Douglas Davis. Guarded by Ayers for most of the night, Davis came in averaging 15.3 points per game but finished with five on 2-for-6 shooting. Davis, who scored 16 against the Bison in Princeton's 66-55 win last season at the CBE Classic, scored the game's first and last field goals but nothing in between.

This was just the first of three straight games for both teams as part of the TicketCity Legends Classic. In Friday's doubleheader opener, Morehead State defeated West Alabama 61-52.

On Saturday, Princeton will take on Morehead State at 2 p.m., followed by Bucknell and West Alabama at 4:30 p.m. One ticket is good for admission to both games, and there is a buy-one-get-one-free sale on all general-admission tickets.

