

Strong Defensive Effort Helps CSU Win at No. 7 Vanderbilt, 71-58

Brown Scores 18 With Eight Rebounds, Seven Assists

[box score](#)

CLEVELAND, Ohio - Cleveland State used a balanced scoring attack and a stifling defensive effort to claim a 71-58 win over No. 7 Vanderbilt on Sunday afternoon in Memorial Gym in the season opener for the Vikings. It was the highest-ranked opponent the Vikings have defeated in program history.

In addition, it was the fifth top-25 team that head coach Gary Waters has knocked off in his tenure at CSU. The program had just one top-25 win before he took over in 2006.

Vanderbilt, which defeated Oregon on Friday night, slipped to 1-1.

CSU's win snapped Vanderbilt's 20-game home winning streak against non-conference opponents, dating to Dec. 3, 2008, in a 74-55 loss to UIC.

The contest was a Regional Round game as part of the Ticket City Legends Classic.

The Vikings have four starters and two redshirts back from last year's squad that went 27-9, won the program's first-ever Horizon League regular season title and advanced to the second round of the NIT. The only starter who did not return from last year was All-American Norris Cole who was in the stands this afternoon.

"Norris Cole was a first round NBA draft pick and now all of a sudden he's gone," head coach Gary Waters said. "You can have first round picks, but when he's your point guard and leading everything, that's a whole different story. I wanted to see starting out how fast we could adjust and make things happen," Waters continued. "And when you've got four seniors on the floor, it makes some good things happen. I wanted to test this group early and they responded."

D'Aundray Brown, who missed last season after injuring his finger, led the Vikings with 18 points, eight rebounds and seven steals. Trey Harmon scored 11 points and dished out four assists, while Jeremy Montgomery added 10 points, including a three-pointer toward the end of the first half, and a three-pointer late in the game with the shot clock winding down that essentially sealed the win.

CSU shot .500 (27-54) from the field and held the Commodores to 18-of-51 (.353). The Vikings also won the battle of the boards, 36-35, and came up with 15 steals.

But one of the biggest factors was CSU's bench, featuring two freshmen and two sophomores, which produced 22 points, including seven each from Sebastian Douglas and Anton Grady. The group added 13 rebounds and five steals.

"We're not used to getting that kind of bench production, but these young guys can play," Waters said. "They were able to provide us with not only scoring, but they rebounded, played defense and I didn't think we lost anything in our level of play with them on the floor."

A three-pointer by Montgomery opened the scoring and he followed with a layup at the 18:16 mark to give CSU a 5-0 lead. It was a lead CSU did not relinquish the rest of the afternoon as the Vikings had an answer for ever Commodore run.

After Vanderbilt cut it to 11-10 at the 13:11 mark, Brown answered with a three-pointer and Douglas came up with a steal and layup to push the lead back to six (16-10).

The lead eventually swelled to as many as 15 points (34-19) on a Grady jumper with 3:01 to play in the first half.

CSU led at the intermission, 37-24.

A quick spurt over the first seven minutes of the second half allowed Vanderbilt to cut the lead to three points (41-38) with 13:32 to play and got the crowd into it. But the Vikings were not fazed.

A jumper by Harmon started a 9-2 run over the next three minutes as CSU regained a double digit lead (50-40) with 9:54 to play.

"We have four seniors on this team and they have been through a lot," Waters said. "We look at them as leaders and I thought they did that today. They never lost their composure and let things come to them."

Vanderbilt had one more run in them, cutting its deficit to six points (53-47) with 6:57 left, but two free throws from Brown and a

layup by Montgomery pushed the lead back to 10 points. Montgomery would all but seal the win with a deep three-pointer with 2:54 left that gave the Vikings a 63-51 advantage.

CSU finished with 15 steals, thanks in large part to their consistent hustle and ball pressure.

"We call that Water Pressure," Montgomery said.

The Vikings return home to host Rio Grande on Tuesday (Nov. 15) in the regular season home opener at 7:00 p.m. in the Wolstein Center.