

Florida Defeats No. 2/2 Michigan State, 77-74

[box score](#)

Atlantic City, N.J. – Sophomore guard Erving Walker (Brooklyn, N.Y.) scored 12 points in the second half and senior forward Dan Werner (Middletown, N.J.) hit two free throws in the final seconds of regulation to led Florida to a 77-74 victory over No. 2/2 Michigan State (4-1) in the semifinal round of the 2009 Legends Classic at Boardwalk Hall in Atlantic City, N.J., Friday. In the sixth meeting between the two schools, UF improved to 5-0 for the fourth time in five years.

Florida advances to the championship game of the Legends Classic and will face the Rutgers Scarlet Knights at 8 p.m. (ET) Saturday. Rutgers defeated UMass, 83-75, earlier Friday in the first of the two semifinal games. Michigan State and UMass will meet at 5:30 p.m. Saturday in the consolation final.

Florida hit 22-of-25 from the charity stripe and six Gators combined for a season-high 11 steals against the Spartans. Five UF players registered double-digit scoring figures in the efforts, including Walker (12), junior forward Chandler Parsons (Casselberry, Fla.) (14), redshirt junior forward/center Vernon Macklin (Portsmouth, Va.) (10), junior forward Alex Tyus (St. Louis, Mo.) (11) and sophomore guard Ray Shipman (Miramar, Fla.) (10). Werner finished the evening with nine points, including 4-of-4 from the free-throw line, while Shipman registered a season-high three steals.

With just over six minutes left in the game, Walker hit his first shot, a two-pointer, and Werner hit a trey and two free throws to tie the score at 59-all, giving the Gators momentum to finish strong.

With the game knotted for much of the second half, Walker hit a three-pointer with just under two minutes in the game, and proceeded to make two free throws that put UF ahead, 74-71, with 1:27 left to play. Florida held a 74-72 advantage with a minute remaining in regulation. An additional free throw by Walker, and two by Werner in the final seconds, offset the two-point Spartan shot in the last minute, resulting in the upset by the Gators.

The Orange and Blue grabbed eight steals in the first half alone, including three from Shipman. Macklin and Shipman both chipped in eight points in the first 20 minutes of play. Florida additionally forced 13 turnovers and hit 22 points in transition to take a 38-36 lead into the locker room at the half.

Broadcast Information: Saturday 11/28: Florida vs. Rutgers – 8:00pm

