

Patterson Leads Pittsburgh Past Texas Tech, 76-53

Lamar Patterson scored a career-high 23 points.

[box score](#)

NEW YORK (AP) - Pittsburgh had been known for a long time for its tenacious defense and it hasn't stopped even with the emphasis on new rules that have made it harder to cover people than in the past.

"Defense is how you separate yourself," Panthers senior forward Lamar Patterson said after scoring a career-high 23 points in a 76-53 victory over Texas Tech on Monday night in the semifinals of the Progressive Legends Classic.

Even with the new rules, the Panthers were allowing just 54.8 points on 36.8 percent shooting entering the game against the Red Raiders.

How do the Panthers adjust to the lack of hand-checking and contact?

"Just moving our feet. That's all we can do," Patterson said. "If we touch them it's a foul and if we get two in the first half we're coming out."

No Panther would want to miss the first half lately.

This was the second straight game Pitt put an opponent away early. The Panthers took off to a 47-23 halftime lead over Lehigh last week on the way to a 77-58 victory.

On Monday, they opened the game on a 34-8 run on the way to a 41-18 halftime lead.

"I'm real excited how we played to start the game," Pitt coach Jamie Dixon said. "We seem to be in a pattern of doing that now and that's a good thing to have going for you."

The Panthers (5-0) will play the winner of the Stanford-Houston game on Tuesday night at Barclays Center.

Cameron Wright added 12 points for Pittsburgh, which had a 36-10 record at Madison Square Garden, the arena across the river, since 2000-01 as a member of the Big East. The Panthers are in their first season in the Atlantic Coast Conference.

"We definitely were excited to be on the road and get into Brooklyn and get tougher competition," Wright said. "We approach every game the same way."

Jaye Crockett had 19 points for the Red Raiders (4-2), who are playing their first season under coach Tubby Smith.

"We missed a lot of easy shots we usually make," Crockett said. "We just missed too many easy shots."

"We knew they were a good team. They were hot, making every shot. They were on fire."

The Panthers 12 for 26 from the field in the first half, including going 6 of 14 from 3-point range.

Patterson had 14 points and four assists in the first half, accounting for more points in the opening 20 minutes than the Red Raiders.

Texas Tech shot 25 percent in the first half (6 of 24) and committed 12 turnovers, its average for the first five games of the season. The Red Raiders shot 38.8 percent (19 of 49) for the game and finished with 17 turnovers.

"Pittsburgh was pretty impressive. They shot the ball and did things well and we seemed to be intimidated to start the game and missed some baskets," Smith said. "I was impressed with their defense. We have some things to work on."

Pittsburgh shot 47 percent (25 of 53) for the game, including 10 of 24 from 3-point range.

The Red Raiders opened the second half on a 7-2 run to get within 43-25 and they got as close as 18 points one other time - 47-29 with 15:43 to play - as they made five of their first six shots from the field with Crockett going 4 for 4.

"It's very tough," Crockett said of facing a 23-point halftime deficit. "You have to be mentally ready, it's more mental than physical. You have to put the first half in the past and try to win the second half."

Pitt's biggest lead was 73-45.

This was the second meeting between the schools and both have been in the semifinals of the Legends Classic. The Panthers beat the Red Raiders 80-47 in 2008 and went on to beat Washington State 57-43 in the championship game.