

Vols Overcome Strong Effort By Prairie View A&M

[box score](#)

KNOXVILLE, Tenn. (AP) -- Bruce Pearl has been preaching improved rebounding and free-throw shooting to his No. 7 Tennessee Volunteers.

The preaching has just begun.

Tennessee was a woeful 21-for-47 from the line and was out-rebounded by a taller Prairie View A&M team in the Volunteers' 89-75 victory on Friday night in the second round of the StubHub Legends Classic. Ramar Smith led the Vols' parade of futility, going 0-for-12 from the stripe.

The Volunteers were beaten 48-43 on the glass and allowed 20 offensive rebounds.

The result was a stark contrast to Tennessee's 101-44 demolition of Arkansas-Monticello on Wednesday. The Vols trailed at the half against the hustling Panthers and didn't seem to have the game in hand until the last six minutes.

"Our concerns remain the same -- rebounding, free-throw shooting and 3-point shots," Pearl said. "I cannot say a lot of terrifically positive things except to give Prairie View tremendous credit. We just were not prepared to play."

Prairie View didn't seem fazed by competing against a top-10 team, diving for loose balls and running an effective offense featuring Aaron Smith, who scored 21 points on 5-for-9 3-point shooting. The Panthers were 11-23 from beyond the arc for the game compared to 4-of-21 for the Vols. They kept their composure throughout the game, before Tennessee's depth and athleticism won out.

"We really believe we can compete with any team in the nation," said Panthers head coach Byron Rimm II. "We were happy to be up at the half, but we knew it was a 40-minute game. We were not just happy to be here. We were determined to win."

His team might have done just that had they taken better care of the basketball. Prairie View (1-2) committed 30 turnovers, which led to 32 Volunteer points. Tennessee (3-0), which had 19 steals, was also bailed out by the play of Ryan Childress, who tied a career high with 14 points while adding eight rebounds.

"It's an equal-opportunity offense and if the ball comes around, you know I'll shoot," Childress said. "My role is to beat and bang and play hard at both ends. If you do that, you'll get opportunities."

Chris Lofton scored 14 points for Tennessee, passing Michael Brooks for 11th place on the Volunteers' all-time scoring list. Lofton, the defending Southeastern Conference player of the year, was just 3-of-13 from the floor and is 6-of-28 for the season after three games.

The Vols featured a balanced scoring attack, as has been the case throughout the first three games. Tyler Smith led the Vols with 15 points while Ramar Smith added 10 as four players scored in double figures. No Tennessee player has contributed more than 15 points in a game this year, though the team is averaging 90 points per outing.

Prairie View had three players in double digits, as Brian Ezech scored 15 points and Derek Johnson 10. Ezech added six rebounds, all on the offensive glass, while Johnny Cobb had 10 boards and nine points.

2-for-7 from beyond the arc. Last year's Southeastern Conference player of the year is now 6-of-28 from the field this season.

On the positive side for Lofton, he was 6-of-7 from the free-throw line tonight, in stark contrast to the rest of his teammates, who were a combined 15-of-40. Ramar Smith led the parade of futility by missing all of his 12 attempts.

Childress broke out with his best game of the young season for the Vols, scoring 14 points in 19 minutes and adding eight rebounds. He had just six points combined in Tennessee's first two games.

Prairie View featured seven players 6 feet 8 or taller, presenting one of the tallest lineups Tennessee will face this year. Four Panthers contributed six or more rebounds, including Ezech, who got all of them on the offensive glass.

