

Notre Dame holds off Colorado 89-83

NEW YORK (AP) – Notre Dame had a good enough start that a tough second half didn't make a difference.

Bonzie Colson had 22 points and 12 rebounds for his fifth career double-double and the Fighting Irish held off Colorado 89-83 on Monday night in the semifinals of the Legends Classic at Barclays Center.

"We got off to a great start, really flowing offensively," Notre Dame coach Mike Brey said. "Second half Colorado really guarded us and we had to find different ways to play. We made free throws and it was kind of a grinding game. I'm proud of how we held people but we have a lot of guys that have won big games and have big game pressure on them. I thought that experience helped us escape tonight."

The Fighting Irish (4-0) will play Northwestern, which beat No. 22 Texas 77-58, for the title on Tuesday. The Buffaloes (3-1) trailed by 15 points at halftime and were able to get as close as four points twice in the final minute but Notre Dame went 14 for 14 from the free throw line over the final 1:33 to keep

Colorado at bay in the first meeting between the schools.

Matt Farrell had 20 points and V.J. Beacham and Steve Vasturia added 17 each for Notre Dame which went 27 for 29 from the free throw line. Colson, a 6-foot-5 junior, matched his career high with the 12 rebounds.

"I just wanted to stay composed and just stay focused, make sure I attacked the glass on both ends," Colson said. "Coach emphasized before the game trying to get more rebounds and I think as a collective unit we did really well in that. Just stay composed and we stayed in character."

Xavier Johnson scored 23 points, Derrick White had 20 points and nine assists and George King added 17 points and 13 points for Colorado, which was able to rally in the second half by shooting 16 of 34 from the field (47.1 percent). The Buffaloes finished 18 of 19 from the free throw line.

"There's a sense of urgency. We were down 15 points. The margin of error was very small," King said. "So we had to pick it up defensively. That was our main focus going into the second half."

Notre Dame came out firing and gave itself a comfortable 50-35 halftime lead.

The Fighting Irish shot 54.5 percent (18 of 33) from the field, including making six of 12 3-point attempts in the first half. Colorado, meanwhile, struggled from the field in the first half shooting 37.1 percent (13 of 35) from the field and only 2 of 8 from 3-point range.

"I liked our guys fight to get back. You dig yourself a hole in the first half, against a good team it's tough," Colorado coach Tad Boyle said. "They made free throws down the stretch when they had to. I knew they were a good free throw shooting team. So it's tough to come back on teams like that. We have to fight for 40 minutes, not for 20."

Notre Dame couldn't keep up the shooting in the second half and the Buffaloes were able to make it close but the Fighting Irish sealed it at the free throw line.

"We've been in those situations before. I never thought we were going to beat them by 20. They're too good a team," Brey said. "They're an NCAA Tournament team and I think they're going to be pretty darn good in the Pac 12. You're not just going to put them away. I expected a run and I'm glad that our guys were poised. We made some big free throws."

BIG PICTURE:

Notre Dame: The Fighting Irish will be looking for their first in-season tournament since winning the Coaches vs. Cancer Classic in 2012. ... Former Notre Dame star Kelly Tripucka was honored during the game as a legend for the Fighting Irish. ... As of Nov. 18 Notre Dame was scheduled to face seven teams in the top 15 in the AP poll.

Colorado: This was the Buffaloes first game away from home. ... Colorado was picked fifth in the Pac-12 preseason poll. ... The Buffaloes came in allowing 59.3 points per game.

NICE PLACE:

Notre Dame started its run to the Elite Eight of the NCAA Tournament last season at Barclays Center. The Fighting Irish beat Michigan and Stephen F. Austin to advance to the regional. They will be back here in March for the Atlantic Coast Conference Tournament.

"I said the karma would still be here," Brey said. "We're comfortable in this building. I'd love to get one more tomorrow night and then to come back in March and try to get some. But there's no question, the familiarity and the memories. We were in the same locker room. Oh it was good stuff, all good stuff."

BAD SHOTS:

It's a lot easier to list the players who missed free throws rather than making them. Austin Torres missed the two free throws for Notre Dame and Johnson went 5 of 6 for the Buffaloes. Colson led all free throw shooters by going 9 for 9.

ON THE MARK:

Both teams almost hit their scoring average for the season. Notre Dame came in averaging 88 points per game and the Buffaloes were at 82. The defensive numbers took a hit, however. The Fighting Irish came in allowing 53.7 points and Colorado allowed 59.3.