

No. 16 Texas A&M routs Oklahoma State behind Williams

By DENIS P. GORMAN

NEW YORK (AP) — Robert Williams was asked whether he detected hesitancy from the Oklahoma State Cowboys to challenge him in the paint.

The reigning SEC Defensive Player of the Year grinned, then laughed.

Question answered.

"I do my best not even just to block it but to contest it," Williams said after scoring 11 points, grabbing 11 rebounds and a throwing down handful of alley-oop dunks to help No. 16 Texas A&M beat Oklahoma State 72-55 in the first game of the 2017 Progressive Legends Classic on Monday night.

Williams added three steals and two blocks for the Aggies (3-0). DJ Hogg led all scorers with 18 points. Tonny Trocha-Morelos finished with 12 points and Admon Gilder had 10.

"Our biggest strength is our depth," Aggies coach Billy Kennedy said. "We can play big. We can play small. We have a lot of guys who can score the basketball."

Scoring was among a myriad of issues for Oklahoma State (3-1). Brandon Averette led the Cowboys with 10. The Aggies took a 39-22 lead into halftime, thanks to Williams and a 25-7 run over the final eight minutes of the half. Williams checked in five minutes into the game and scored nine points in the first half, eight on alley-oops.

"A lot of their run was that we had breakdowns defensively," first-year Oklahoma State coach Mike Boynton said. "We just didn't execute."

"I don't know from a schematic standpoint there was anything to adjust."

Texas A&M extended the lead to 22 after Gilder knocked down a jumper 1:22 into the second half. Oklahoma State outscored the Aggies 18-8 in the next 8:03 to cut the deficit to 52-42.

"They've got a good team," Kennedy said.

Just as it looked as if Oklahoma State would seriously challenge Texas A&M, the Aggies had a 12-3 run to push their advantage to 64-45. The stretch was punctuated by Gilder's 3-point baskets on back-to-back possessions.

"Texas A&M is a really good team," Boynton said. "Credit to them. I don't know if it was their best game but they played pretty well. ... They were just better than us."

BIG PICTURE

Oklahoma State: The Cowboys shot 25.7 percent from the field in the first half while surrendering 15 baskets on 28 shots.

Texas A&M: There is a reason SEC and national media pieced Texas A&M to finish third in a preseason poll. The Aggies are tall, long and against Oklahoma State seemingly contested every pass and every shot.

SWAT STUFF

Williams' streak of consecutive games with at least one blocked shot reached 32 in the win over Oklahoma State.