

Shaq Goodwin's career night leads Memphis Tigers past Justin McBride and the UCF Knights

With a career-high 35 points, Shaq Goodwin and the Memphis Tigers beat the UCF Knights 97-86 on Tuesday night at CFE Arena.

By **Timothy Briggs** - January 26, 2016

The Memphis Tigers, led by Shaq Goodwin's career-high 35 points, proved to be too much for the UCF Knights as they fell to the Tigers 97-86 on Tuesday.

Goodwin was a force in the paint for Memphis and showed he was far and away the best player on the floor. UCF started the game well, leading by as many as four and being tied with their American Conference foes at 27 with around six minutes left in the first half.

But as UCF began to fatigue, Memphis made their charge. A 12-2 run cemented with Goodwin slams and a slew of three pointers put the Tigers in front and they wouldn't relent from there.

Memphis shot at a 52.4 percent clip from the field, including 12 3-pointers, nine of which came from guards Ricky Tarrant Jr. and Avery Woodson. UCF also played well offensively by shooting 50 percent with seven made threes of its own, but UCF turned the ball over with too much regularity and were too often too drained of energy to keep up with Memphis' athleticism in the paint and on the perimeter.

Justin McBride has had a standout junior campaign so far and tonight was UCF's best player, scoring 20 points and making every one of his eight field goal attempts. A.J. Davis added 15 and joining the Knights in double figures were Adonys Henriquez and Matt Williams with 13 and 10 points respectively.

The Knights were able to stay with the Tigers for a majority of the contest, but the Tigers' conditioning and athleticism took its toll on the Knights, in particular McBride, whose large frame keeps him from being at his best for longer than a few short bursts.

His 24 minutes tonight were much needed and when fresh, looked like a force on both ends of the floor, but as his legs got more tired, so did UCF.

"It's never been a matter of talent," McBride said. "We can always play with whoever in the entire country but it's a matter of eliminating the little mistakes. We're beating ourselves and if we can control the things that we can control like turnovers and rebounding, then we can come out and win."

Tacko Fall, who started at center, was a non-factor in the game as he only played 10 minutes and went scoreless. Goodwin forced UCF to try different looks inside in order to help contain his interior presence with Staphon Blair getting a look at trying to stop the senior star for the Tigers, but there was little answer for Goodwin all night.

UCF's guards were also turnover-prone for a majority of the contest, forcing themselves into the paint in situations where it was not always optimal. The Knights turned it over 15 times just two nights after turning it over 19 times against Tulsa on Sunday.

"Our guards are still trying to make things happen at the wrong time," head coach Donnie Jones said. "I don't think it's selfish play, I think it's just guys misunderstanding the time and the score."

UCF had a hard time adjusting to Memphis' energy when Memphis' run came at the end of the first half, but showed great resolve with multiple runs in the second half to cut the lead periodically throughout the rest of the game, but it was never a doubt who the better team was.

"It was a tough matchup for us tonight, so you have to give Memphis credit," Jones said. "They played well. Our team was hyped and juiced up after coming off the bus at 2 o'clock [a.m.] yesterday, but now we have to learn how to play at this level night in, night out."

McBride was UCF's best player on the night and has really been refining and sculpting his frame and his game since his freshman year. McBride is in much better shape and can handle a much larger minute total, but he owes his recent success to one thing.

"Confidence. That's about it," McBride said. "My teammates trust me and that'll give anybody confidence. My teammates will tell me, 'Don't get tired, post up, come on, ball's coming to you.' I'm so quick to give up, but they won't let me. I was legit dead. I had no legs, no nothing, I was done and that was with about 10 minutes left in the game, and I'm frustrated with myself because I let the team down. I've come a long way, but I have a long way to go and I'm not going to let this happen again."

With the loss, UCF drops to 10-8, with a 4-3 record in American Conference play. The Knights will play next on Sunday, January 31 against Connecticut at CFE Arena.

Timothy Briggs