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Georgia Southern University



Southern Men's Basketball Takes Down State

The Eagles travel to Texas next week, return home March 1 and 3

Marc Gignac

Men's Basketball

Posted: 2/16/2018 11:17:00 PM

STATESBORO – [Tookie Brown](#) tallied 23 points and five assists, and Georgia Southern shot 56 percent in the first half and never trailed on its way to an 85-80 Sun Belt Conference men's basketball win over Georgia State Friday night before a sellout crowd in Hanner Fieldhouse.

Brown, who missed the first match-up against the Panthers with an injury, made 6 of 12 from the field and added nine free throws for Georgia Southern (17-10, 8-6). [Mike Hughes](#) tallied 14 points, three assists and two blocks, and [Ike Smith](#) chipped in 12 points and four rebounds.

D'Marcus Simonds led Georgia State (19-8, 10-4) with 21 points and added nine rebounds, while Malik Benlevi collected 14 points and 12 boards. Jeff Thomas scored 17, and Devin Mitchell netted 12.

The Eagles pick up a point in the Southern vs. State Rivalry series and now trail 8.5-1.5.

The story

Trailing by 14 points late in the contest, Simonds scored the last six points in a 14-5 State run, and his layup cut the margin to 73-68 with 1:52 to play.

[Montae Glenn](#) stemmed the tide for Southern with a free throw after getting fouled in the paint, but Kane Williams was fouled and hit a pair to cut the margin to four points with 1:08 to go. The Eagles inbounded to Brown, who tried to go by Simonds, and the Panther guard was whistled for his fifth foul.

Brown hit two from the charity stripe for a six-point cushion, and after Thomas missed a 3-point try, [Shawn O'Connell](#) tacked on another free throw for a 77-70 lead with 46 seconds left. State kept on coming, scoring on five of its last six possessions of the game, but Southern went 8 for 10 from the charity stripe in the last 34 seconds to seal the win.

With the Eagles leading 59-52, [Jake Allsmiller](#) sparked a 9-4 Southern run. Hughes added a 3-pointer from the wing, and a putback by [Montae Glenn](#) made the score 68-54 with 6:23 to play.

The Eagles held the Panthers scoreless for a 4:30 stretch in the first half as they pushed an early seven-point lead to 33-18 on a Brown triple from the wing with 4:38 left in the period. Thomas hit a 3-pointer to spark a State charge, and the Panthers scored the next 10 to cut the margin to five points with 1:07 to go. Smith got the Eagles final five points of the frame, and Southern led 38-30 at halftime.

Quotables from Head coach [Mark Byington](#)

Overall

"I thought we played really well at times, and we did what we had to to win at the end. There were times of the game where I thought we were playing great basketball, and we needed to get going. We're about to head to Texas and then two at home and then we head to New Orleans so we have to go in the right direction and hopefully, this is a good step for us."

On maintaining the lead

"I wanted the guys to just keep playing and have fun, and that was our main mentality going into the game. There was only one or two times I had to remind them to have fun. We started the second half giving up a little run, and [Jake Allsmiller](#) made some big 3s to kind of get us back and get us a lead. Then, we never allowed it to get where it was less than a possession game. We were always up three or four points, even towards the end. We made enough free throws. I wish we would have made more, but we made enough to be able to finish the game out."

On the bench

"I thought in the first half when we expanded the lead out, those guys brought tremendous energy and they were aggressive and they played well. They came in and played unselfish and played hard and we're not going to win the game without them."

On the atmosphere

"It was a tremendous environment. It probably looked great on national television, and I don't think we win the game without that environment and those fans."

Next up

The Eagles make their swing through the Lonestar State. GS takes on UTA Thursday at 8 p.m. ET and travels to Texas State for a 5:30 p.m. ET meeting Saturday. Both games will be broadcast live on ESPN3.

Georgia Southern Athletics provides current information on all its sports through its official website, GSEagles.com, which is fully responsive across all mobile devices. Information on Eagle athletics can also be found through social media channels facebook.com/GSATHletics, twitter.com/GSATHletics and Instagram.com/GSATHletics. To purchase tickets to Georgia Southern athletics events, visit GSEagles.com/tickets.

In order to expedite entry and provide a safe environment for all patrons and participants, Georgia Southern Athletics has implemented a Clear Bag Policy for all ticketed sporting events, effective Aug. 1, 2017. Fans can find the complete policy as well as an FAQ section at GSEagles.com/ClearBag.

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