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Michael Grafton

Game Recap: Men's Basketball | 2/18/2017 8:40:00 PM | Bryan Johnston

Eagles Hold Off Pesky Bobcats in Key Sun Belt Game

Brown's late free throws ice a 70-67 GS win

STATESBORO, Ga. - Tookie Brown hit two free throws with five seconds remaining in the game and scored 21 points as the Georgia Southern men's basketball team held off a pesky Texas State squad for a 70-67 win in a key Sun Belt Conference tilt at Hanner Fieldhouse Saturday evening.

Georgia Southern is now 10-1 at home this season and has won nine in a row on its home court.

Brown was 6 of 10 from the field and 3 of 5 on 3-pointers, but his six free throws were the difference in the win. Ike Smith dropped in 17 points for GS and also grabbed six rebounds, while Jake Allsmiller canned three triples for nine points.

Kavin Gilder-Tilbury led the Bobcats and was the top scorer in the game with 22 points, and Nijal Pearson tallied 10 points and five rebounds. Texas State hit only 22 field goals in the game, but 10 of them were 3-pointers.

With the win, Georgia Southern moved to 17-10 overall, 10-4 in the Sun Belt Conference while Texas State fell to 15-10, 8-5 in the league. The Eagles remain a half game back of first-place UTA, which comes to Statesboro Monday night.

The story

After racing out to a 17-point lead in the first half, the Eagles saw the Bobcats out-score them 41-32 in the second half as Texas State drained seven 3-pointers in the period.

The Bobcats closed a 12-point halftime deficit to four, 59-55, on a pair of Pearson free throws with 4:38 to go. Brown answered with a 3-pointer, and the Eagles pushed the lead to nine on a monster dunk by Smith with 2:11 to play.

GS left the door open with some missed free throws late, and Bobby Conley's triple with six seconds left made it a one-point game. Brown was fouled and hit both from the line with five seconds to go. Ojai Black's 3-point try at the buzzer was short, and Mike Hughes corralled the rebound as the Eagles held on for the big win.

Texas State came into the game allowing a league-low 62.5 points per game, but the Eagles shot 51.1 percent from the floor to score almost eight points more than the Bobcats normally allow.

Quotables

Sophomore guard Tookie Brown

On last free throws

"We practice those game situations all the time, and coach always tells us to shoot the same shot with rhythm every time and go out and knock it down."

On his free-throw routine

"I didn't know how long I was taking until guys on the team said, 'Tookie's taking too long, he's taking like 12 seconds on the free-throw line.' So I changed it up a little bit so now I take like five or six seconds, just go through my same routine."

On Monday's game against UTA

"It's a challenge. It's two of the best teams in the conference going head-to-head, and we're looking forward to it. It should be a great game."

Head coach Mark Byington

"We started very well on the offensive and defensive ends. They are really hard to score against. They are always one of the best defensive teams in the country, and they make everything hard on you. We came out with a great rhythm early, made some shots, really guarded and did a lot of good things. Then, we just lost some energy after halftime. Guys were tired and lacking some things, but we have some gutsy guys. They figured it out and got enough stops and made enough plays and enough free throws. I would like to have made a couple more so it wasn't so tight, but

we beat a good team today and I'm proud of the guys for pulling it through."

Up next

The Eagles play their final home game of the season Monday against league-leading UTA (20-6, 10-3 SBC) at 7 p.m. The game will be broadcast live on American Sports Network and is available online on ESPN3. Promotions: Men's Basketball Senior Day - Join us as we honor the seniors *James Holder* and *Dominique Bullock* and student manager Joy Bonner for their hard work and dedication in the classroom and on the court. It's also Southern Explosion Dance Team Senior Day.

Georgia Southern Athletics provides up-to-date information on all its sports through its official website, GSEagles.com, through social media channels facebook.com/GSAthletics, twitter.com/GSAthletics, iOS app Georgia Southern Eagles and Android app Eagles GATA. For tickets to Georgia Southern athletics events, visit GSEagles.com/tickets.