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Tim Cowie

Game Recap: Men's Basketball | 1/7/2016 10:33:00 PM | Marc Gignac

South Alabama Tops Men's Basketball for First Sun Belt Win

The Eagles continue their four-game homestand Saturday against Troy

STATESBORO, Ga. – Ken Williams scored a game-high 22 points, and South Alabama held Georgia Southern to 27 percent shooting from the field to post a 64-58 Sun Belt Conference men's basketball win over the Eagles Thursday night in Hanner Fieldhouse.

Ike Smith scored a career-high 20 points and added six rebounds for Georgia Southern (4-9, 0-3), and Tookie Brown chipped in 17 points. Mike Hughes finished with nine points, four rebounds and two steals. Georgi Boyanov collected 10 points and 10 rebounds for South Alabama (6-8, 1-2), and Nick Stover scored 10 points. The game was marred by fouls as the teams combined for 54 and shot 72 free throws. The Eagles went 19 of 31 from the charity stripe, and the Jaguars were 18 of 41. Georgia Southern was 18 of 67 from the field and 3 of 26 from 3-point range, while South Alabama made 44 percent from the floor.

The story

Brown scored 11 points, and Hughes netted seven in a 24-8 Eagle run that erased a 16-point second-half deficit. Brown hit a triple from the wing and followed it with a fast-break layup to tie the score 49-49 with 8:01 to go. After a Jaguar turnover, the Eagles had a chance to take their first lead of the game, but [Devonte Boykins'](#) 3-pointer from the wing rimmed out with the shot clock winding down. Williams converted back-to-back conventional 3-point plays as the Jaguars scored eight straight points to open a 57-49 lead. Smith hit a 3-pointer from the corner, and Brown added a runner to help cut the margin to 57-54, but Georgia Southern came away empty on its next five possessions. Meanwhile, Boyanov made two free throws, and the Jags went 5 of 8 from the charity stripe inside the final minute to seal the win. The Eagles missed 10 of their first 11 shots of the game and fell behind 10-2 early but battled back, and a turnaround jumper by [Jake Allsmiller](#) cut the margin to 23-21 late in the first half. South Alabama responded with a 9-4 run, keyed by two 3-pointers by Williams, and increased the margin to 34-25 at halftime. The Jaguars scored the first seven points of the second half to open a 41-25 advantage.

Quotable from Coach [Mark Byington](#)

"This is one of the few times this year I thought we fought through adversity. Things were not going well – they were making shots and obviously had a lot of momentum, and we fought all the way back, tied it, and then we just could not get over the hump. We played hard. We didn't exactly play smart. We didn't execute well, and we didn't shoot the ball well. We came into the game one of the top 3-point shooting teams in the conference. We took some bad ones, and they did a good job on defense of finding our shooters and forcing them to take tough shots."

"We got in a situation where we started the second half poorly, they went on a run, and then we were able to fight back. That's a situation we were in earlier this year, and we caved in, honestly, so I'm encouraged by that. We can play better. We need to clean some things up with execution and being able to play without fouling and understanding how to guard guys better. In the second half, there were some positives. We're going to emphasize the positives and fix some things, and we're going to keep on moving."

"We just have to learn to show our hands and not get cheap ones. If we're playing hard, we're going to foul, but our issue right now is that sometimes it's lack of position, and that is causing us to foul too much."