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Play Video



Tim Cowie

Game Recap: Men's Basketball | 2/4/2016 10:34:00 PM | Marc Gignac

Sizzling Second Half Sends Men's Basketball to Win over UTA

The Eagles play host to Texas State Saturday in Hanner Fieldhouse.

STATESBORO, Ga. – [Tookie Brown](#) scored a game-high 26 points, and Georgia Southern shot 62 percent and hit nine 3-pointers in the second half to sail past UT Arlington 82-73 in Sun Belt Conference men's basketball action Thursday night in Hanner Fieldhouse.

Brown was 10 of 20 from the floor and matched his career high with seven assists to go along with two steals, and the freshman was one of three Eagles who scored 20-plus points in the contest. [Mike Hughes](#) finished with 23 points, three steals and two blocked shots, and [Ike Smith](#) collected 20 points, seven rebounds, three blocked shots and a steal. Smith scored 18 in the second half on 5 of 6 from the floor and 3 of 4 from 3-point land.

Jalen Jones tallied 24 points, five rebounds and three steals to lead UT Arlington (14-7, 5-5), and Kaelon Wilson contributed 19 points, 11 rebounds and three steals. Kennedy Eubanks chipped in 10 points after making all five of his field goal attempts, and Erick Neal posted seven points, eight assists and two steals.

Georgia Southern (9-12, 5-6) outscored the Mavericks 55-39 in the second half after shooting just 31 percent and netting 27 points in the first frame. The Eagles' 11 blocked shots were one shy of the school record, set against Texas San Antonio in 1989.

The story

The Eagles trailed 36-30 early in the second half but used a 22-6 run, ignited by consecutive Brown 3-pointers, to open a 52-42 lead with 12:37 to play. Brown netted 10 points during the spurt, and Hughes scored eight. The Mavericks trimmed the margin to six points before the Eagles pulled away with a 13-4 run and took a 65-50 lead on a Smith 3-pointer with 6:59 remaining. The margin grew to 18 points on a Brown 3-pointer with 5:37 to go, and the lead did not dip below double digits until the game's final minute.

UT Arlington built a 26-16 advantage late in the first half as the Eagles made just five of their first 21 shots. Georgia Southern cut the margin to four points on a 3-pointer by Hughes, but the Mavericks pushed the lead to 34-27 at the break. Georgia Southern shot just 31 percent in the stanza, while UTA shot 47 percent and made 5 of 11 from downtown.

Quotables

Ike Smith

"We just weren't playing how we usually play in the first half. The ball was kind of stagnant, and we had a lot of turnovers. Being young is not an excuse for us anymore. We're at the stage where we're getting more mature, and we're playing veteran teams so we have to play like we're a veteran team."

"I had a rough first half, and the coaches told me to keep shooting. When I see one shot go in, the rim just gets bigger, and when I hear the crowd yelling, I just kind of feed off it."

Head Coach *Mark Byington*

"I wish I could bottle up that second half, especially the first five or six minutes. We were really good, playing with energy and enthusiasm. We came out of the locker room and responded well. That's something new for us, being down and having to come back. It's a lot of new experiences for these guys, and they're getting better. They're learning how to win, gaining some confidence and starting to see the recipe of what we have to do to win."

"Ike got off to a bad start, and a lot of times when young guys get off to a bad start, they don't know how to climb their way out of it. He was really, really good in the second half,

making big shots, and stuck with it. It shows growth, and that's what I'm proud of."

"It's nice to be back at home. We're used to getting yelled at, and now we're getting yelled for. That helps. When we're making that run, and the crowd is in it - I've said it many times, guys enjoy playing in front of a crowd. When it's packed, Hanner Fieldhouse is the best home court environment in the league. When they come out and support us, this is a tough place to play."

Next up

Georgia Southern plays host to Texas State on the Eagles' 11th annual Pack the House in Pink Night, which supports breast cancer awareness and education. Tipoff is set for 7 p.m. in Hanner Fieldhouse.

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. Tickets to Georgia Southern athletics events can be purchased by visiting GSEagles.com/tickets.

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