



Norse 3-point barrage too much for young Lakers



NKU's 3-pointers were the difference Friday night during a 66-57 win against Grand Valley State in the NCAA Division II Midwest Regional at The Bank of Kentucky Center. Jessie Slack (left), Danyelle Echoles (center) and Brandi Rayburn (right) combined for 11 3-pointers.

No. 1 NKU starts fast, coasts to 66-57 win over Grand Valley State

By Terry Boehmker

HIGHLAND HEIGHTS, Ky. - Defending national champion Northern Kentucky University made a season-high 13 3-pointers and defeated Grand Valley State University, 66-57, in the opening round of the NCAA Division II Midwest Regional on Friday at The Bank of Kentucky Center.

Senior guards Jessie Slack and Danyelle Echoles were the offensive leaders for the Norse (29-2), who are ranked No. 1 nationally in the NCAA Division II poll. Slack made five 3-pointers and finished with a game-high 24 points, 10 rebounds and seven assists. Echoles made four treys for 12 points.



Danyelle Echoles

shoot it."

The victory gives NKU a 16-1 record on its new home court, The Bank of Kentucky Center. That's where the Norse

will play Michigan Tech in a regional semifinal game at 8:30 Saturday.

Grand Valley State (20-10), the No. 8 seed in the regional field, had won the last three games it played against NKU, but the Lakers weren't able to extend that streak on Friday.

"I thought our young team played extremely hard and fought to the bitter end, and I'm very proud of them,"

said Grand Valley State coach Janel Burgess, who had one senior, two sophomores and two freshmen in her



NKU head coach Nancy Winstel guided her team to a victory Friday night.

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starting lineup.

Burgess was surprised to see the Norse shoot 54.2 percent (13 of 24) from behind the 3-point arc.

"If you told me they could make 13 of 24 threes when we scouted them, I would've said definitely not," Burgess said. "We played some solid defense and they made some very good open shots and some tough contested shots."



Karen Brackman (20) challenges Emma Veach during the first half.

The Norse opened the game with a 10-0 run, but Grand Valley State took a 15-13 lead when freshman guard Jasmine Padin hit her third 3-pointer at the 9:55 mark in the first half.

Slack put NKU back on top by scoring 13 points during an 18-8 run, but the Lakers made the last two baskets of the first half and trailed, 31-27, at the break.

During the first half, NKU shot 54.5 percent (12 of 22) from the field overall and made 7 of 12 3-point attempts, but the Norse committed 13 turnovers in those first 20 minutes. That enabled Grand Valley State to score 13 points off those turnovers and keep the score close.

Slack was fouled while making her first 3-point goal of the second half and converted the free throw to give NKU at 39-29 lead with 16:07 left on the clock.

"I didn't realize how close they were, but anytime you get a four-point play that's huge for momentum," Slack said. "That's like sticking a dagger in somebody. I mean that's a lot of points in one play."

After NKU extended its lead to 44-30 on a 3-pointer by Echols, the Lakers tried to make a comeback, but the closest they could get was eight points.

Grand Valley State's leading scorers were Padin with 18 points and freshman guard Emma Veach with 14.

The NKU defense held the Lakers to 30.6 percent (19 of 62) shooting, but Winstel wasn't completely satisfied with her team's effort.

"Coaches always complain," Winstel said. "If we held a team scoreless I would probably still find something to complain about."

But Winstel couldn't complain about the end result.

"Survive and advance," she said. "We play tomorrow, and that's all that matters."



NKU's Danyelle Echoles (25) applies defensive pressure on Grand Valley State's Jasmine Padin during the Norse's 66-57 win Friday in the opening round of the NCAA Division II Midwest Regional. Echoles helped No. 1 NKU improve to 29-2 overall and advance to the regional semifinals against Michigan Tech at 8:30 p.m. Saturday night. The senior guard made four 3-pointers and added three assists for the defending NCAA Division II national champions.

