
North Texas 68 - Denver 66

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It was the opposite ending as the WKU heartbreaker Saturday as Leonard Hopkins nailed a jumper with .3 left in the game to give NT the 2 point win over first place Denver.

I don't think I have been to a more thrilling game at the Super Pit. The game was close throughout, with neither team pulling away at any point.

Several players had big games, so let's take a look at them:

Leonard Hopkins - You have to start with the guy who hit the game winner. Not only is that a tough shot with the pressure, but it was at a tough angle to the side of basket, and he had to get it off quickly. Hopkins also contributed 18 points and was a perfect 6-6 from the line.

Isaac Hines - If I said that you could argue the player of the game had 2 points, you would think it must have been an ugly game. But scoring isn't what Hines does. He led the team in rebounding with 8 boards, led the team in assists with 3 and led the team in steals with 3 with only 1 turnover. He does all the little things to help a team win, he reminds so much in style of Jason Kidd.

Ron Harris - Harris broke out scoring 16 points in easily his best game ever for North Texas. His contribution is huge because it is not something you count on, and anytime a player like that steps up so big in the points category, it helps a ton.

Jeffrey Simpson - Simpson was 4-4 with 9 points and 2 blocks, but the most impressive thing he did was not on the box score. He harassed Denver's Yemi Nicholson who may be the Sun Belt POY and an NBA prospect to a night of 5-17 shooting and just as importantly 5 fouls. Simpson has really come through and without his emergence, postseason hopes would be non-existent.

Justin Barnett - This was the best game I have ever seen Barnett play. The 8 points aside, he actually did a good job on Nicholson. His lack of mobility came into play a couple of times, but he did his best to make up for it and did a better job on Nicholson than anyone thought he could do. If he can pull out this kind of effort over the next 4-7 games, it will help the team immensely.

Calvin Watson - Watson shot poorly from the field and turned the ball over 5 times. The good news is, he did hit a 3 when it counted most, and scored 12 points despite his shooting touch issues early on.

This was a complete team effort, and is the kind of game that can beat anyone in the Sun Belt. Denver was in first place, had demolished NT earlier in the season, and had a 6'10 leaper that was being talked about as the best player in the conference. He got his 17 points, but had to go 5-17 to get it, and fouled out and watched the decisive final minutes on the bench. Simpson and Barnett did a great job on him and Harris did his part as well. The next game is at UL-Lafayette which is a tough game for anyone, but the next two games after that are at home. NT trails New Orleans by one game for the #3 seed and a first round bye in the tournament. UNO comes to the Super Pit next week, so each game from here out is absolutely crucial.

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