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NU erases slow start to win by 9

OSU from page 7

defense on Nebraska's Tyrone Lue. OSU frustrated the Huskers before NU found the golden touch from an unlikely pair of hands.

Sophomore Troy Piatkowski, averaging 1.6 points per game entering Wednesday's contest, connected on the second of three 3-pointers five minutes into the second half, sparking a 10-2 Nebraska run that set the tone for the remainder of the night.

"When I had an open shot I just took it," said Piatkowski, whose hot shooting forced OSU into a 2-3 zone and freed up Lue. "It wasn't what we planned, but that's what happened."

Piatkowski, who scored a career-high 11 points in 19 minutes, then delivered a crowd-rousing alley-oop to Cookie Belcher, trimming Oklahoma State's lead — which reached 13 points early in the second half — to six at 51-45.

"I really thought the first half belonged to Oklahoma State, and the second half was decisively Nebraska," Nee said. "That's how it goes."

Outscoring OSU 47-28 after half-time, the Huskers shot 15 of 26 (57.7 percent) and grabbed 22 rebounds to the Cowboys' 11. Seniors Mikki Moore and Bernard Garner, both of whom did not score in the first half, combined for 13 points after the break.

A dunk by Belcher at the 10:47 mark tied the game at 56, and Lue, who led Nebraska with 23 points, sank

a 3 less than one minute later, putting NU on top for good. After draining a pair of 3-point goals to open the game, Lue attempted only five shots in the first half.

R.W. McQuarters, a standout safety on the Cowboy football team who has played in just six basketball games this year, shadowed the Husker point guard for much of the game. OSU Coach Eddie Sutton also used Alonzo Mayes, an All-Big 12 tight end, to counter depth problems after injuries and personal problems shelved five Cowboys this season.

With McQuarters handling the point, Nebraska increased its defensive pressure in the second half, forcing eight Oklahoma State turnovers after just two first-half miscues. Meanwhile, Nebraska took care of the basketball, losing it just nine times, NU's lowest total since a 1995 win over Georgia in the National Invitation Tournament.

"We've been having trouble with the box-and-one and the zones," said Lue, who left the game for 15 seconds late in the second half to nurse a twisted ankle and an injured wrist. "They had a great strategy, but we came out to win."

The Cowboys cut the Husker lead to one point on three occasions in the last 5½ minutes, but with NU up 67-66 at the 3:26 mark, Lue drilled a 3 from the left corner along the baseline, giving Nebraska a four-point advantage. Piatkowski then hit another 3,

and OSU never got back within five points.

Venson Hamilton scored 11 points for Nebraska and grabbed nine of his game-high 12 rebounds in the second half. Junior Brett Robisch led OSU with a career-best 24 points on 10-of-14 shooting; Adrian Peterson scored 17 points and Chianti Roberts added 15.

In the first half, an 18-4 Cowboy run — capped by a Peterson 3-pointer — put OSU up 33-21 before the Huskers ended the half with a 19-7 burst. In a game with so much on the line heading into Sunday's clash with KU, Nee couldn't explain Nebraska's flat start.

"I know my basketball team," Nee said, "and I know how to coach them. There's only one thing they respond to, and I have to stay with that as hard as it is. You just have to keep teaching."

"I'm going to go to Barry's, and I'm going to have a couple beers and my hands will be shaking and my guts will feel like they're falling out."

As long as NU continues to win, Piatkowski said he'll be happy, even after Wednesday's poor first half.

"They got us down a little bit," he said. "But we've been in this situation plenty of times. We were worried, but not the way we should have been. That's just the Nebraska Cornhuskers basketball team. That's just how we are."

KU's other guard rips Huskers

KANSAS from page 7

remaining, the Jayhawks went on a 6-0 run in a span of 40 seconds to take an 8-point lead.

Pride missed the back end of a two-shot foul, but Kansas secured the rebound and Halbleib made NU pay, making a 15-footer.

The Huskers couldn't answer, missing a 3-point attempt on their next possession, but Halbleib sealed the game's outcome with a 3-pointer of her own.

"When we hit that 3-pointer, I could see it in their faces and the way they were physically responding that we were where I wanted to be," KU Coach Marian Washington said.

Dixon, who hyperextended her knee before Kansas's first meeting with NU, was slowed by sore knees on Wednesday, Washington said. Dixon, the favorite to earn the Big 12 player-of-the-year award played almost 33 minutes but scored just 10 points — 11 shy of her average.

Halbleib's hot shooting overshadowed DeForge's 23-point effort, 16 of which came in the first half.

DeForge, a 5-11 junior from Niagara, Wis., has crossed paths with Halbleib before. In high school, DeForge broke Halbleib's state scoring record her senior season at Niagara.

NU, which played its second game without point guard LaToya Doage, went on two 9-0 runs in the first half, including a run in the final two minutes that gave the Huskers a 33-25 halftime advantage.

DeForge started the run when she threw an in-bounds pass off a KU defender and scored. She added another bucket, followed that with a 3-pointer and dished an assist to Nicole Kubik who scored a layup that beat the intermission buzzer.

"In the first half I was getting good looks," DeForge, who played more than 38 minutes, said. "We were screening people off, and I was getting quality shots. In the second half,

they were more aware of where I was at all times. They kept switching screens, and somebody was always on me."

DeForge said the Huskers need to try and keep a positive attitude after the loss, which dropped them to 18-7 overall and 8-7 in the league. NU's psyche has been shaken by losing four of its last five games by a total of 13 points. Nebraska resides in sole possession of seventh place in the conference.

Beck said the Huskers gave a good effort for the second straight road game against a ranked team, but too many mistakes cost NU any chance at winning. Nebraska lost at No. 12 Texas 71-70 just over a week ago.

NU closes out its regular season against Oklahoma State Saturday in Stillwater, Okla. Beck said that game isn't a must-win as the Huskers look to qualify for the NCAA Tournament for the second straight season.

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