Fighting Illini Are No Match for Run and Gun Gauchos

By Matt Hurst
Staff Writer

It took two years, but the win was just as sweet. The #11 UCSB women's basketball team was pitched against #12 Illinois in the semi-finals of the Preseason Women's National Invitation Tournament, the same Illinois team that knocked it out of the NCAA Tournament two years ago in Illinois' Academy Hall.

The Gauchos (3-0 overall) jumped out to a 15-0 lead and never looked back, taking the game 71-61 and moved on to today's game vs. #5 Boston College, 78-70.

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"Our offense was good because of our defense," said Buescher, who led all scorers with 21 points to 15-0 lead and never come back and play catch up," Illinois Head Coach Theresa Grentz said.

But, the Gauchos could not bandage the bleeding that Illinois had caused. The Illini opened up the second half on a 15-9 run that tied the game at 41 and then took their only lead on Tanja Catchings, who was miserable from the line throughout the game (13-23), but in free ones when needed: down the stretch, nailing eight of 10 to help put the Illini away. But, with the Gauchos' offense in syn, the free throws weren't exactly needed.

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UCSB
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last eight minutes, we did not play. Outside of that, I'm very proud of how we played.
In the second half of play, the Cardinal continued where it had left off, going on a 5-0 run in the opening minutes after halftime. The Gauchos stayed within striking distance for most of the second half, as they went on a run of their own—scoring eight unanswered points to trail Stanford 30-29. The shooting woes continued for both teams, though, as shooting woes continued for both teams.

Several points. Stanford fouled out of the game after just 19 minutes of play.

It was more of an emotional game than we've ever played," said Allen, who finished with seven points to go along with five rebounds and an assist. "So we were more physical than we are usually. I was too aggressive on the court, trying to set an example and I did too much."

Freshman guard B.J. Ward stepped in and impressed in place of the fouled-out Allen. With Santa Barbara down 39-34, the ’11’ Ward drove from the wing and elevated for a dunk over the Cardinal’s Julius Barnes. Ward's jam rimmed out after Barnes fouled him, bringing the Thunderdome to its feet. Ward's two free throws brought UCSB to within three, but that would be the closest the Gauchos would get as Stanford continued to build on its lead.

Hull led the way for UCSB, scoring 13 points and pulling down seven boards. Jordan had a team-high in rebounds with eight to match his eight points. Ward finished with six points, all of which came from the charity stripe. Stanford's junior forward Jarred Collins led all scorers with 21 points, and added 12 boards as well.

"I think it was a great experience playing against Stanford," Hull said. "I learned a lot of lessons and the team learned a lot of lessons. We played pretty tough. I think overall, it was a great opening experience."

The Gauchos proved to be extremely resilient in the face of those early letdowns, and they are more importantly, fearless. Freshman B.J. Ward had the most electrifying 0-5 night in memory for the Gauchos—jumping off the bandwagon like it was a runway—heading off a cliff. The fellow on the inside, however, just hung a few extra pine tree air fresheners off the mario and didn't forget what made them a special team last season... heart.

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On Saturday, the men's basketball team will play for the Preseason WNIT championship tonight at 6. Catch the game on 1250 KEYT or online at broadcast.com.

Listen Up Gauchos!
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HOOPS
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said senior point guard Stacy Clineminith, who had six points, five assists and six boards in a game-high 37 minutes. "Our pressure defense enabled us to run. That's why our offense was effective."
"Coming into the game we knew we had a very talented, but not fundamental team," UCSB Head Coach Mark French said. "In order to be a good team — and we want to be a good team — we can't rely on talent alone. This win progresses us toward that goal of being a good team as well as a talented team."
UCSB also dominated the glass, winning the boards game 57-45. Senior forward Kristi Robe pulled down 10 boards and also dumped in 16 points, while Cooper grabbed nine boards of her own and finished with seven points.
Susan Blauser and Allfonn Curtain led the Fighting Illini with 16 points each while Catchings added 15 points and 11 rebounds.
Tonight’s game can be heard on 1250 KEYT or online at broadcast.com at 6.

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