

No. 7 Horns rout Tulane

KATIE BAILEY

Tuesday, Nov. 18, 2008

AUSTIN – The 2,500th Texas men’s basketball game was far from a nail-biter. The No. 7 Longhorns routed the visiting Tulane Green Wave 76-51 tonight at the Frank Erwin Center, easily collecting their 1,565th win in 103 years of men’s basketball and their second of the season.

Junior forward Damion James paced the Longhorns with 16 points. Texas’ top returning scorer, senior point guard A.J. Abrams, added 15 including the team’s only three baskets from three-point range. Texas took charge from the outset of the game. The Longhorns, which have never trailed this season, allowed their opponents to tie only once, at 6-6, in the opening minutes.

From that point forward, however, the Longhorns put on a clinic. On the offensive side, Texas shot 48.2 percent from the floor, with 50 percent in the first half. Texas started the second half with a 21-2 run and led by as much as 37 points with 10:08 left in the game. Five players scored in double figures.

“We don’t have one selfish player on the team,” said junior forward Damion James. “We all know who can do what and we have to work on our offense because our defense is keeping us in the game. But we have to continue to work hard on offense and everything will eventually take care of itself.”

Coach Rick Barnes, in his 11th season at Texas, was impressed with his team’s aggressiveness on offense and ability to make drives.

“We need to attack,” he said. “It’s pretty simple, that real estate all around that line area is what you’ve got to control on both ends and we’re really trying to hit it hard and we need to keep doing that.”

The starting lineup wasn’t the only part of the Texas team to contribute in this game. Even though the Green Wave outscored the Longhorns 27-16 from the bench, sophomore forward Gary Johnson poured in 11 points. Dogus Balbay, a sophomore guard from Istanbul, Turkey saw his first minutes in a game tonight – 26 in fact.

“I was really happy for Dogus,” Barnes said. “I thought he was in pretty much control on the offensive end. He only had one turnover in 26 minutes; we’ll take that every night.”

Though Barnes was pleased with his team’s intensity, he felt his team needed to minimize its ball handling mistakes.

“Nineteen turnovers is unacceptable,” he said. “We can’t get in a habit of not taking care of the basketball.”

The Texas defense was stingy from the start, causing the shot clock to expire on Tulane’s opening possession. Texas’ defense held the Green Wave to 31 percent shooting.

The game spiraled out of control for Tulane with just under nine minutes left in the first half. An Abrams 19-footer was followed by three consecutive Longhorn steals. James made the first, punctuating the play with a dunk. Justin Mason finished his own next steal with a dunk, and the third, another Mason steal, ended in an Abrams three.

The Longhorns next face St. Joseph's on Nov. 24 at the EA Sports Maui Invitational in Maui, Hawaii. Alabama, Chaminade, Indiana, top-ranked North Carolina, Notre Dame and Oregon will also compete in the tournament.