



Officially speaking, NKU opens arena with a "W"



NKU's Leslie Malone (23) rejects the shot attempt of Ferris State's Dontae Molden during the first half of Saturday's regular-season opener in The Bank of Kentucky Center. At the right, NKU's DeAaron Williams finishes off the first official dunk in the history of the new facility.

Norse defeat Ferris State, 72-57, in The Bank of Kentucky Center

HIGHLAND HEIGHTS, Ky. - The new era in Northern Kentucky University basketball officially tipped off Saturday afternoon when Ferris State visited The Bank of Kentucky Center for the regular-season opener.

NKU made the first-ever official game inside the new arena a triumphant occasion by posting a 72-57 victory against the visiting Bulldogs in front of a crowd of 2,477.

A week ago, NKU met the University of Louisville in an exhibition game inside The Bank of Kentucky Center. The Norse hung with the Cardinals for most of the evening before dropping an 84-69 decision.

While Saturday's contest against Ferris State did not receive the same hype, the outcome was more important to NKU. Just ask Norse head coach Dave Bezold.

"This one really counted, and it's against a team in our region. That, in itself, made this a big win for us," Bezold said. "It was tough

getting out of the gate, and I think everybody witnessed that. It looked like we set basketball back about a 100 years in the

first five minutes of the game when we had 12 turnovers.

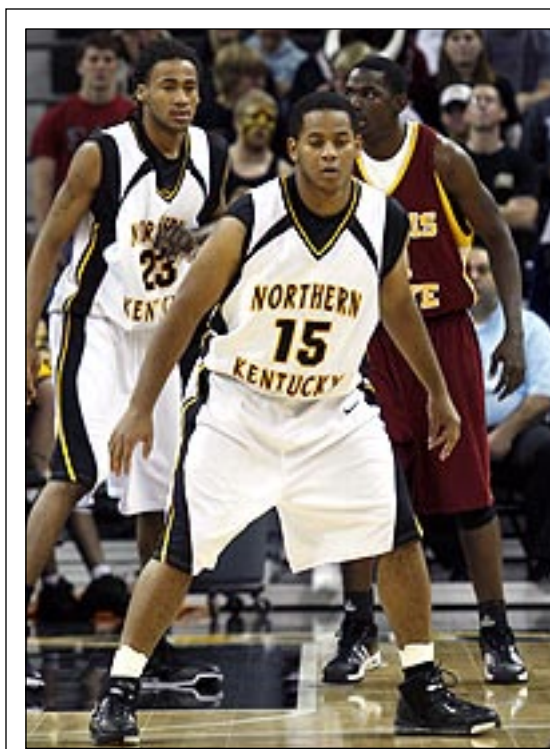
"We don't normally have that many for a game. I was pretty impressed defensively after that first five minutes. We did a very good job of picking it up defensively, which helped fuel our offense."

Dustin Maguire poured in a game-high 28 points and grabbed nine rebounds to lead NKU.

Maguire, a sophomore guard, was 8-for-16 from the



Dave Bezold



Billy Finnell (15) dished out six assists for NKU on Saturday afternoon.

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field and made all nine of his free-throw attempts. He netted 14 points in the first half as the Norse built a 38-27 lead.



Tony Rack (10) scored 16 points to help NKU defeat Ferris State.

"We had two exhibition games against a couple of good Big East teams (Louisville and Cincinnati), and even though we didn't win those games, we felt like we had a strong showing for ourselves," Maguire said. "I feel like those games had us prepared to start the season today. Ferris State has a good team and we just played together as a team, worked hard, and even though we started off slowly, we kept on fighting through it."

NKU freshman guard Tony Rack added 16 points off the bench. Rack, a Moeller High School graduate, ignited a 19-3 run in the first half by making a trio of 3-pointers that turned a 12-5 deficit into a 24-15 NKU advantage.

NKU buried five pointers during that run, including the three triples by Rack.

"Tony stepped up in a big-time way. I was really excited for him to knock down those shots," Maguire said. "He just needs to make one or two and get his confidence because he is a good shooter. He really knows how to play the game."

By the time halftime arrived, NKU held a 38-27 lead.

"We started off slowly, but Maguire and Rack rescued us in the first half with their shooting," Bezold said. "I think Rack really keyed our big spurt in the first half by making those outside shots."



NKU's Dustin Maguire (5) looks for an opening against Ferris State.

A 15-2 run in the second half extended a 52-48 Norse lead into a comfortable 67-50 advantage with 2:20 remaining. Maguire and Rack each drained a 3-pointer during that spurt.

Billy Finnell dished out six assists for NKU, which was 9-for-22 from 3-point range. Leslie Malone

added six points, five rebounds and three blocked shots as the Norse improved to 7-0 all-time against Ferris State.

Josh Young scored 18 points for Ferris State, which dropped to 0-1. The Bulldogs were held to 33.3 percent shooting from the field and lost the rebounding battle by a 37-30 margin.

Ferris State head coach Bill Sall came away impressed with NKU and its new arena.

"I told coach Bezold that this is as nice of a facility as I've seen. I actually like this better than the Breslin Center at Michigan State simply because this is a basketball arena," Sall said. "They did a fantastic job, and it is a beautiful place."



A'Daeron Duncan (35) attempts to block the shot of Ferris State's Justin Keenan (40) in the first half of Saturday's game. Also defending for NKU is Leslie Malone (23).



Scott Bibbins scores the first NKU basket in The Bank of Kentucky Center while being fouled by Ferris State's Justin Keenan (40). Bibbins also converted the free throw to complete the three-point play.