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Now UC them, now you don't! NKU wins, 56-52



NKU's Rachel Lantry (5) battles Cincinnati's Michelle Jones (52) for a loose ball during the first half of Saturday night's exhibition game at Fifth Third Arena. Pictured on the right is NKU freshman guard Casse Mogan (32) dribbling against Cincinnati's Shanasa Sanders.

Brannen-less Norse begin exhibition slate by knocking off 'Cats

CINCINNATI – It doesn't count.

That was the only consolation for the University of Cincinnati women's basketball program after the Bearcats watched defending NCAA Division II national champion Northern Kentucky University walk out of Fifth Third Arena with a 56-52 win Saturday night. The Norse totally dominated play in the first half of the exhibition game and held off a late UC rally to collect the victory.

NKU, playing without star inside performer Cassie Brannen, won the rebounding battle against the bigger Bearcats by a 38-31 margin. The Norse also made seven shots from 3-point range during the first half to build a 35-22 lead at the break.

"We have been the walking wounded because of injuries the past couple of weeks, so I did not know what to expect in this game," NKU head coach Nancy Winstel said. "If you had told me Cassie Brannen would not play in this game and we would still win, I might have thought you were crazy. But our players executed what we wanted to do, especially in the first half, and we were solid on defense all night."

Jessie Slack scored a game-high 17 points to lead NKU,

which is ranked No. 1 nationally in Division II Bulletin's pre-season poll. She also grabbed seven rebounds and added three steals. Slack and Danyelle Echoles each netted 10 points in the first half as the Norse coasted into the locker room with a 13-point lead.

NKU made just 29.2 percent of its shots in the second half, including 0-for-8 from 3-point range. The Norse, however, kept UC off the boards and still owned a 52-42 lead with 3:46 remaining when Karen Brackman made a short jumper.



Nancy Winstel



Jessie Slack scored 17 points as NKU defeated Cincinnati, 56-52.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Shanasa Sanders and Angel Morgan each hit 3-pointers to bring UC within 52-48 with 2:50 left, but Brackman extended NKU's lead to 54-48 by knocking down a pair of free throws with 1:04 remaining. That was too much for UC to



NKU's Danyelle Echoles uses a screen set by Karen Brackman (20).

overcome, and NKU avenged last season's 69-67 exhibition setback to the Bearcats.

Rachel Lantry grabbed a game-high nine rebounds for NKU. Brandi Rayburn poured in 14 points in her Norse debut, and Echoles finished with 11 points.

"I thought this was the best floor game Rachel Lantry has ever played for us," Winstel said. "She did a great job rebounding and defending the entire game. She needs

to look for her shot more often, but she was a key. Brandi played a very fine game and hit some big shots."

NKU, which posted a 28-8 record last season, will close out its exhibition schedule next Saturday at 5:30 p.m. when Louisville visits The Bank of Kentucky Center for the first-ever game in the new facility.



NKU sophomore center Kendra Caldwell drives against Cincinnati in the second half of Saturday night's game. Caldwell sat out much of the game due to foul trouble, but NKU prevailed, 56-52.

Photos by Tim Downer, Jeff McCurry & Tom Miller
NKU Sports Information

- A complete photo gallery of the NKU/Cincinnati game can be found later at www.nkunorse.com.



At the left, NKU head coach Nancy Winstel instructs freshman Sadie Bowling during the first half Saturday night. On the right, Jessie Slack drives to the basket against Cincinnati defenders. Slack finished with 17 points to lead the Norse past the Bearcats, 56-52.

