

LSU holds off NSU

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BATON ROUGE – Free throw shooting nearly cost LSU, and yet it wound up saving the Tigers Tuesday night as Northwestern State chopped a 21-point deficit down to four points in the final two minutes of a 102-95 Tigers triumph at the Maravich Assembly Center.

LSU (3-0) sank 10 of its final 12 free throws in the last 1:31 after making only 19 of its first 39. The Tigers came into the game making only 45 percent from the line in their first two games.

Senior James Hulbin scored a career-high 29 points while junior college transfer DeQuan Hicks rang up 28 for the Demons (3-1), who hit 55 percent of their shots in the second half to fuel their rally.

Shavon Coleman led LSU with 22, Anthony Hickey scored 21 and Charles Carmouche posted 19. Hickey (8-10) and Carmouche (11-15) saved the day for the Tigers at the free throw line.

Northwestern led for the game's first 11 minutes but a big run in the closing minutes of the first half gave LSU the upper hand. After going down by 21 with 12:14 remaining, the Demons gnawed away at the deficit and got it down to 90-86 with 1:56 left.

The Tigers got a basket by Eddie Ludwig 10 seconds later and twice pushed the spread to seven points with their deadly free throw aim in the stretch run. The Demons got it back to four at 97-93 with 17 seconds left on two Shamir Davis free throws, but NSU was called for a disputed intentional foul on the inbounds play and Ludwig drained two free throws, then Carmouche added two more after the ensuing inbounds pass to double the margin in just two seconds off the clock.

"A tough call for us at that point," said Demons' coach Mike McConathy. "But credit LSU for making the free throws when it mattered most."

After NSU controlled the first 11 minutes, the Tigers rained in 3-pointers and stymied the Demons with a ball-hawking defense to take command by launching a 19-5 run over the first half's final 3:48, lifting LSU ahead 52-38. Northwestern suffered five turnovers in that stretch while Hickey and Stringer each drained a pair of 3-pointers as LSU closed by sinking 7 of its last 9 shots.

LSU didn't snag the lead until 8:38 remained in the first half. Both teams had trouble with turnovers, but LSU picked off 10 steals of the Demons' 12 miscues and scored 16 points from them.

Northwestern's struggles continued for the first eight minutes of the second half before speeding the tempo and LSU foul trouble altered the game.

"When we were aggressive offensively, we were good," said McConathy. "But we had just too long a stretch where we didn't match LSU's level of intensity. They really defended us well, did a great job strategically and got a big lead. We almost overcame it because we bought into

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each other and played near our capabilities. We'll learn from this.”

The Demons won't play again until next Monday night at Texas A&M. They are at home next on Dec. 4 against Louisiana Tech.