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Leopards Come Back To Beat Holy Cross

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WORCESTER, Mass. -- Lafayette overcame its worst first-half shooting performance of the season with a 17-2 run to start the second half en route to a 54-43 victory over Holy Cross on Thursday night. Tony Johnson, Ryan Willen and Dan Trist each scored 11 points to lead the Leopards offensively as Johnson contributed all of his points in the final 20 minutes at the Hart Center.

With the win, Lafayette head coach Fran O'Hanlon collected his 234th career victory, tying the mark for victories by a Patriot League coach held by former Bucknell coach Pat Flannery.

Lafayette limited Holy Cross (8-10, 2-2) to 33 percent shooting from the field and seven percent from beyond the arc. The 17 second-half, and 43 total points were both season-lows for a Lafayette opponent. Lafayette outscored Holy Cross 40-19 in the second half.

Lafayette (8-11, 3-1) connected on its first seven shots of the second half to take a 31-26 lead with 15:47 to play. Willen began the stretch with a jumper, Trist converted two layups surrounding R.J. Evans' basket at the other end and Johnson made a reverse lay-up to pull Lafayette within four 2:13 into the half and force a Holy Cross timeout. Following the stoppage, Lafayette hit three consecutive treys from Willen, Rob Delaney and Joey Ptasinski to cap the run.

Holy Cross responded with a 10-2 run of its own over the next 3:56 to regain the lead at 36-33. Mike Cavataio netted four of his eight points during the spurt that ended with Eric

Obeyskere's jumper with 11:51 remaining.

A Crusaders' bucket tied the score at 38 with 9:53 showing before the visiting Leopards ripped off an 11-0 run that spanned 5:49. The stretch began with two Johnson layups, followed by a Jim Mower triple and four Willen free throws to go ahead 49-38 with 4:28 to go. A Phil Beans' lay-in briefly stopped the bleeding for Holy Cross but Johnson hit two freebies after he was fouled during a scramble for a loose ball.

Leading 51-41 and in possession of the basketball, Willen broke the Holy Cross press and found Mower open in the wing with two minutes to play. Mower drilled a three to give Lafayette its largest lead (54-41) and put the game out of reach. In total, Lafayette outscored Holy Cross 21-7 over the final 11:51 seconds of the contest.

In the first half Lafayette shot 6-for-31 from the field (19 percent) and 1-of-14 (7 percent) from beyond the arc. During the second stanza, the Leopards' shot 13-of-25 (52 percent) including 6-of-9 from downtown.

Lafayette returns to Kirby Sports Center on Sunday when its hosts archrival Lehigh at 2 p.m. Like tonight's game, the game will only be televised on CBS Sports Network.

Notes:

Lafayette turned the ball over nine times, the second straight game it gave the ball away fewer than 10 times.

Lafayette improved to 5-0 when holding opponents under 20 made field goals (18).

For a full breakdown of the game's stats, click here.

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