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UVI Women's Basketball Team Continues Perfect Start to Season With Gritty Comeback Victory in HBCU Classic Opener; Men's Team Suffers Third Straight Defeat

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Kashay Bass makes a floating layup over an outstretched Arkansas Baptist defender in first half action during the HBCU Classic hosted at the UVI Sports and Fitness Center on Wednesday night. By. KYLE MURPHY/ VI CONSORTIUM

The University of the Virgin Islands' Women's Basketball team improved to 3-0 on the season with a thrilling 58-52 victory that saw them overcome a 13-point first half deficit to earn a gritty victory in their opening game of the HBCU Classic at the UVI Sports and Fitness Center in St. Thomas.

The Lady Bucs had four players score in double figures as Kaeani Berry and Kaya Evans each scored 15 points, Kashay Bass scored 12 points and Kierra Neal scored 10 points in the victory.

UVI scored the game's first basket to go up 2-0 early in the first quarter but Arkansas Baptist defense forced multiple turnovers and they went on a 12-1 run to lead 12-3 about halfway through the first quarter.

A Evans three-pointer for UVI with about five minutes left in the first quarter stopped the run temporarily but Arkansas Baptist rallied off of seven unanswered points to build their lead to 19-6 with two and half minutes left in the first quarter.

UVI responded by closing the quarter on a 6-2 run and trailed 21-12 going into the second quarter.

A Lynnea Pugh basket for UVI opened the scoring in the second quarter to trim the deficit to seven, 21-14 before Arkansas Baptist responded with a three-pointer to increase their lead back up to double digits, 24-14, with just over eight minutes left in the first half.

UVI trimmed the deficit to seven on three more occasions during the first half before another Evans three-pointer with just over two and half minutes left in the half cut the margin separating the sides to six, 30-24.

When Neal scored the game's next five points, a three pointer with just under two minutes left in the half and a lay up with 1:15 to go before halftime, the Bucs found themselves down by just one, 30-29. Neither team scored for the rest of the half.

Both teams started the second half slowly as there was just one point, an Arkansas Baptist free throw, in the first two and half minutes of the third quarter. Arkansas Baptist scored a layup to extend their lead to four, 33-29 with just over seven minutes to go in the third quarter.

A Berry layup with just under a minute and half left in the third quarter gave UVI a 37-36 lead, their first advantage since the first quarter.

Berry knocked down a jump shot to start the fourth quarter and the Bucs led by three with just over nine minutes to go in the game.

Arkansas Baptist responded with four straight points and regained the lead 40-39 with about eight minutes left in the contest. They extended this margin to three, 42-39, with just under seven and half minutes to go with a pair of free throws.

An Evans three pointer tied the game at 46 with just under four minutes left before Arkansas Baptist answered with a three pointer of their own on the next possession to reclaim their slim lead 49-46.

UVI was down by just two points later in the quarter, but an Arkansas Baptist technical foul with 3:16 allowed UVI's Berry to shoot two free throws, which she made to tie the game at 49.

After a UVI defensive stop, Neal hit one of two free throw attempts and gave the Bucs a 50-49 lead with just under three minutes left in the game.

A Berry lay-up gave the Bucs a 52-49 lead with just under two minutes left and a Neal lay-up extended the margin to five, 54-49, with 1:41 remaining in the game.

An Arkansas Baptist lay-up with 1:20 left in the game cut their deficit back to one possession but Evans stole the ball with 55 seconds left for the Bucs and hit two free throws with 53 seconds left. She hit two more free throws with 18 seconds left to put the game out of reach for the visitors.

The outcome for the UVI Men's Basketball team was in stark contrast to the women's team as the men turned the ball over 41 times during a 101-67 loss on Wednesday night.

The score was tied 5-5 before Wilberforce went on a 7-0 run to give them a 12-5 lead with just under 16 minutes left in the first half. UVI scored the game's next four points to make it a three point game, 12-9, about a minute later.

Wilberforce then went on a 9-2 run to give them a 21-11 lead with just under 12 minutes to go in the first half.

Wilberforce built their lead as high as 15, (28-13) with about nine and half minutes left in the first half before the UVI Men's team rallied a comeback effort. Over the next four minutes UVI outscored Wilberforce 10-3 to make the score 31-23 in Wilberforce's favor with about five minutes left in the first half.

At halftime Wilberforce were leading 43-34.

Wilberforce came out of the locker room firing on all cylinders and scored the first eight points of the half. The closest UVI got after that point in the game was 13 points.