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By Dennis Garcia

SportsTone.net

ASHEBORO - Daniel Mitchell has said a number of times how proud he has been of his Randleman High School boys basketball team for answering every challenge that has been put in front of them so far this season.

The Tigers answered another big challenge Saturday night as they captured the championship of the SportsTone.net Christmas Invitational with a 56-47 victory over Asheboro High School in a game that ended in a half-lit gym because of the lateness of the game.

RHS captured the tournament-title win after registering a 59-46 win over Eastern Guilford in the opening round and a 59-36 win over Thomasville in the semifinals. The three victories push the Tigers' record to 11-0 heading into action next week.

"We tried to treat it as another challenge for a team that's supposed to be pretty good this year," Mitchell said. "We talk all the time about meeting the next challenge. To play three different teams in three nights without a lot of practice is a challenge."

The Tigers were ready, especially from the tip of the championship game. Pacy Wagner scored on a layup just seconds after the tip and before AHS knew what hit them, the Tigers were off to an 11-2 lead just two minutes in.

"Playing Asheboro is tough, you know it's going to be a battle," Mitchell said after the Tigers recorded their second win of the season over the Blue Comets. "Coach (Brian) Nance does a good job and they play hard. We obviously knew the defense they would be in and when you make your shots, the offense looks better."

Jireh Price nailed two quick 3-pointers, Connor Cassidy added another and Tyshaun Goldston, who was named the tournament's most valuable player, added five points in the first quarter before the Blue Comets chipped away to move to within 16-12 after eight minutes.

"It was very much needed, I felt we deserved it," said Goldston, who finished with 19 points in the championship game. "We've been playing really good defense and sharing the ball a lot. It's been working out good for us."

The Blue Comets, who slipped to 9-2 with both losses coming to RHS, never allowed the Tigers to run away with the game and pulled to within two during the contest, but RHS always had an answer. Price had five 3-pointers in the game, including three in the second half. Wagner made a big 3-pointer just as the lights flickered and then half of the flights stayed off with 7:15 left to play in the game. That 3-pointer pushed the RHS lead to 53-48. The gym lights are automatically programmed to dim after 11 p.m. Because of two overtime games and numerous lengthy last-day battles, the championship game didn't begin until nearly 10 p.m.

"They made some big plays," AHS coach Brian Nance said. "Every time we got close, they hit one. Tyshaun hit some threes and he didn't do that the first time we played them. Pacey had some big shots and Jireh sits out there and they are going to find him. That's all part of it."

"I hate the light thing that caused a problem," he continued. "I knew the lights went out at 11 p.m., and I told them, but we couldn't get anybody across the street (Asheboro City Schools building). That hurt us, too."

So did first-half foul trouble from Osiris Rodriguez. AHS' most consistent inside scoring threat was saddled with foul trouble and sat out much of the second quarter, and then, after scoring 11 points in the third quarter to help keep the Blue Comets in the game, he fouled out early in the fourth.

"We missed his scoring," Nance said. "He is our leading inside player.

I thought our younger kids for the first time in a big game, the big crowd, played OK."

RHS led 27-20 at halftime and 40-35 heading into the final quarter. Once play resumed after the delay, AHS' Jalil Timmons kept the Blue Comets close as he scored 10 points in the final quarter, finishing with six 3-pointers and 19 points.

The Tigers, however, finished with nine 3-pointers.

"A weakness we had some years is not having true shooters," Mitchell said. "Obviously, Jireh is good at that, but that's not all he does for us. Getting some other guys involved. Connor, Pacey, Tyshaun stepped out and hit a couple of shots.

"That's what the whole motto is TKO (Know the secret)," Mitchell added. "The secret is more than being unselfish and doing your role. It could change from night to night. Sometimes you have to score, sometimes rebound, sometimes play defense. It's always good to win games and it's exciting to be the winner of the second one here."

Goldston had 19, Price 17, Wagner eight and Chase Farlow chipped in seven.

For the Blue Comets, who advanced to the championship game after beating Chatham Charter 66-33 and Williams 55-36, Timmons had 19 points, Rodriguez 11 and Zak Blackwell five.



2024 Tournament Champion Tigers from Randleman. Photo by PJ Ward-Brown.

Most Valuable Player

Tyshaun Goldston - Randleman

All-Tournament Team

Jireh Price - Randleman

Chase Farlow - Randleman

Osiris Rodriguez - Asheboro

Jalial Timmons - Asheboro

Danarius Gibson - Thomasville

Jaeden Smith - Williams

Gabe McKoy - Chatham Charter

Tim Sanders - Eastern Guilford

Brayden Chapman - Southwestern Randolph

Walker Parrish - Trinity

Sportsmanship Award

Ryder Murphy - Chatham Charter



All-Tournament selections (L-R): (MVP Tyshaun Goldston, Osiris Rodriguez, Jalial Timmons, Chase Farlow, Jireh Price, Gabe McKoy, Walker Parrish, Sportsmanship Award winner Ryder Murphy and Jaeden Smith.