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Hall's offense misses shot to pull out win

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This was one that Seton Hall would just like to forget.

A season-low 12 field goals. Twenty turnovers. Twenty-four percent shooting from the 3-point line.

"In games like this when you're not making shots ... every possession is big," Seton Hall coach Louis Orr said. "The turnovers and transition opportunities we didn't get, they become even more important."

Despite their horrendous shooting effort yesterday (23.5 percent), the Pirates had a chance to defeat Northwestern. But in a game in which Seton Hall shot only 6-of-25 from long distance, it was only fitting that senior Donald Copeland's 3 at the buzzer fell short after Mohamed Hachad's layup with 3.3 seconds left.

The 44-42 loss to the Wildcats at Continental Airlines Arena marked the Pirates' first home defeat this season in seven games.

"When we got the chance to make open looks we didn't make them," said Copeland, who scored a team-high 14 points and shot 4-of-11 from 3-point range.

But this wasn't the case in the opening three minutes. The 5-10 guard from Jersey City, who scored a career-high 25 last Sunday against Tulane, nailed three 3-pointers in the opening 2:41 and tallied the Pirates' first nine points.

A layup from Kelly Whitney (five points, career-high 14 rebounds) and two free throws from junior Grant Billmeier gave Seton Hall (6-3) a 13-2 lead with almost nine minutes elapsed in the first half.

"The way we started, I didn't think we had much of a chance, down 11 or 13 there," said Northwestern coach Bill Carmody, who succeeded Pete Carril at Princeton. "But we got back in the game when we substituted."

The Wildcats, who shot a miserable 29 percent from the floor in the first half and less than 31 percent for the game, rebounded from a 1-of-11 shooting effort to start the game to grab a 21-20 lead at the half.

Northwestern leading scorer Vedran Vukusic got the Wildcats running with the first of his two 3-pointers with 11:10 left in the first half. Hachad (10 points, four rebounds) followed with a driving layup as Northwestern (5-4) rolled off 17 of the game's next 22 points.

Employing a 1-3-1 defense was not a surprise move by Carmody, who admitted that his team was not a good man-to-man defensive squad, but Seton Hall had no answer, coughing up the ball 13 times in the first half and letting an 11-point lead evaporate.

"They played that 1-3-1 wide and big," Copeland said. "We're not used to seeing that at all. The passing angles become difficult for guys."

After opening the game with a 9-2 run, Seton Hall converted only four field goals in the final 17:19 of the first half and nine for the remainder of the game.

"They had a lot of pretty good shots against us, they just didn't knock them down," said Carmody, whose team opens Big Ten play Jan. 4 against Purdue. "Their offense worked fine, sometimes you just don't knock them down."

The Pirates didn't fare any better from the field in the second half against the zone, shooting 16.7 percent (5-of-30), including 3-of-13 on 3-pointers.

"Today was a possession night," Whitney said. "Against a team like that, every possession counts."

Following Whitney's layup, which gave the Pirates a 36-32 lead, Northwestern went on a 10-3 run, capped off by a fall-away 3-pointer from Vukusic with less than 45 seconds remaining.

"I wasn't going to pass the ball that late in the shot clock, so I just took it, one dribble, got my man off of me and shot it," Vukusic said.

Seton Hall junior Stan Gaines drained a 3 from the left wing off a pass from Brian Laing as Seton Hall tied the game at 42-42 with 15 seconds left, but Hachad received a beautiful entry pass from Tim Doyle for the and scored the game-winner.

"Our guys gave a great defensive effort," Orr said. "I can't ask for them to defend any better."

Now they'll just have to find a way to take care of the basketball and find shooters who can put the ball in the basket.