



MENDOCINO-LAKE COMMUNITY COLLEGE DISTRICT NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
November 18, 2018

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EAGLES REPEAT AS HOGUE MEMORIAL TOURNEY CHAMPS

Written by: Joe Langstaff

On Saturday the Mendocino College Eagles men's basketball team shook off a slow start in the first half of the John Hogue Memorial Tournament championship game to go on to win the game decisively over Bay Valley Conference rival Los Medanos Mustangs, 98-71.

The win gave the Eagles, now 4-0 on the season, back-to-back wins in the Hogue Memorial Tournament, the Eagles also defeating the Mustangs in last year's tournament championship game, 72-62.

Eagles sophomore forward Gabe Knight was named the tournament MVP and teammates sophomore forwards Larry Bryson and Jared Strate were also selected to the All-Tournament Team.

In other tournament action on its final day, Cerro Cosa College topped College of the Redwoods 103-72 in the Seventh Place Game. In the Consolation Championship Game, Cosumnes River College defeated Lassen College 79-73. In the Third Place Game, Sacramento City College got the win over Modesto Junior College, 93-74.

Eagles will be back in action this Wednesday, traveling to Skyline College in San Bruno to play a non-conference game against the Skyline Trojans of the Coast-North Conference.

Skyline comes into that game with a 3-2 record and a 3-game winning streak. One of those wins was over Los Medanos on November 9, by a score of 88-82.

The Eagles will play one other game this month, on the road at the two-day Coach Tregs Corsair Classic Tournament at College of the Redwoods.

The Eagles play the first game of that tournament against Shasta College on Friday, November 30 at 5 p.m. They will play their other game of that tournament the next day at 3 p.m. vs. the host College of the Redwoods Corsairs.

The Eagles will not play at home again until December 29, when they host College of Alameda in the Eagles' second Bay Valley Conference of the season; their first conference game scheduled at College of Marin on December 21.

Having played two games in two days on Thursday and Friday, after having not played a game since their season opener with Folsom Lake back on November 6, one wondered if perhaps the Eagles might come into their third tournament game in three days on Saturday a bit fatigued and/or a little stiff or sore, or combinations thereof.



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They didn't get off to the best of starts in the game on Saturday against Los Medanos.

The Mustangs won the opening tip and promptly hit a trey to take a quick 3-0 lead two minutes into the game.

The Eagles finally go on the board with a Strate 3-point goal. The Mustangs immediately answered with a runner for two. Sophomore guard Diego Reyes hit a jumper in the paint for two, but the Mustangs answered with another trey to lead 12-5 four minutes into the game.

It looked like the Eagles might have finally got untracked when, first Bryson and then Knight hit treys on consecutive Eagles' possession to trim the Mustangs' lead to 12-11 with 15:20 on the clock.

The two defenses played five scoreless possessions in a row before the Mustangs broke the sting with another 3-point goal and Reyes drove for a layup for the Eagles,

The Eagles then went 6 possessions without scoring a point. In the meantime, Los Medanos tacked on 6 points to their side of the ledger to lead 20-13 with 9:25 to play in the half.

In the next minute of play, Knight twice drove into the paint for layups. The Mustangs drove for layup, now leading 22-17.

With 7:36 play, Reyes was fouled on a drive, making both free throws and the Eagles calling a timeout.

A jumper put the Mustangs up 24-19 with 7:24 left in the half.

A minute later, Bryson made a steal and fed Strate for a corner triple to pull the Eagles to within 2 points at 24-22. The Mustangs answered with a putback.

Two possessions later, Bryson hit a three from the top of the key, pulling the Eagles to within one at 26-25 with 5:41 to play in the half.

A minute-plus later the Eagles took their first lead of the game on a layup, going ahead 27-26, with 4:23 showing on the clock. They would never trail again in the game.

Another 2 minutes-plus of play saw the game tied at 30 all.

That tie lasted 25 seconds. Just inserted into the game, freshman guard Fred Bryant knocked down a three to give the Eagles a 33-30 lead with 1:45 to play in the half. It was a lead they would not relinquish for the rest of the game.

After a defensive stop, the Eagles knocked down another three, this one from the corner by freshman guard Kevin Deel with 1:27 on the clock. The Eagles began to assert themselves and take control of the game.



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With 24.9 seconds to play in the half, the Mustangs were called for an intentional foul after Deel had made a steal and passed to Bryson who was fouled.

Intentional fouls draw a technical and two free throws. Knight shot and made those two free throws. Then Bryson went to the line to shoot two free throws for the foul, making both, with the scoring now 40-30 Eagles.

Because of the technical, the Eagles kept possession of the ball. With 11.9 to play in the half, Deel hit another trey to put the Eagles up 43-30.

The Mustangs took and missed a final shot just before the half ended.

A 13-point lead at half is not insurmountable. But in the second half the Eagles did what good teams do. They fended off a Mustang push early in the half to try to close the gap. Then the Eagles began adding on to their lead.

Mustangs briefly cut the lead to 8 at the 16:30 mark of the half, the score 50-42 Eagles.

But on the Eagles' next possession, sophomore forward Bymnet Teclé got an offensive board and fed Bryson who knocked down a three to get the lead back to double digits.

Three defensive stops and a Knight jumper and then a layup boosted the Eagles' lead to 57-42, bringing a Los Medanos time out with 14:01 to play.

Four minutes later, the Eagles still had a 15-point lead, now 63-48, with 10:14 left to play in the game.

The Mustangs needed to start closing the gap. But instead, it was the Eagles adding on, with players coming off the bench and contributing.

Freshman center Cole Kinslow hit a short baseline jumper off an assist by Bryant. On the next Eagles' possession Lowdermilk got an offensive board and fed Knight for a driving layup.

Deel hit another trey with 7:54 to play, putting the Eagles up 72-54, with the Eagles calling a timeout.

When play resumed, Bryson blocked a shot, with Eagles working a fast break resulting in another Deel triple.

With 6 minutes to play, a Knight trey made the score 79-59.

At the 5-minute mark, a jumper by freshman guard Landon Garcia-Floyd made the score 86-65. Two Reyes' free throws after being fouled on a drive made the score 88-65. A Strate jumper plus a free throw on a foul on the play made the score 91-65 with 3:42 to go.

Garcia-Floyd drove for a layup and Kinslow converted both free throws after being fouled, with under 3 minutes to go the Eagles up by 30 at 95-65. Los Medanos had not scored in 7 possessions.



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Likely all players available to play saw action by the time the clock finally expired, leaving the final score of 98-71.

Almost hitting the century mark in the final score, it was not a surprise that five Eagles scored in double figures: Knight again the game and team leader with 23, Bryson 16, Reyes and Deel 15, and Garcia-Floyd 10. Other scorers for the Eagles included Bryant with 7, Strate and Kinslow with 6 points each.

As a team, the Eagles made 15 treys, Deel the leader with 5 and Bryson next with 4.

The Eagles shot 17 free throws in the game, making 15. Los Medanos also shot 17 free throws, making 10.

Eagles head coach Billy Offill was understandably pleased with his team's performance in the tournament championship game and in the tournament as a whole.

"I was happy to see our three returning sophomores Jared Strate, Larry Bryson and Diego Reyes go back-to-back in our tournament, winning it two years in row. (The last time the Eagles won their tournament two years in succession was the 2011 and 2012 seasons.)

"Jared and Larry were All-Tournament. That's awesome for them. Diego was really good all weekend. Diego did such a fantastic job on (Los Medanos guard) Raazhel Watkins who go 36 against Modesto. Diego didn't give him much of anything and he was on him the whole game. (Watkins scored 11 points.) What a great job by Diego, running our team and also guarding the other team's best player.

"The tournament field was pretty tough. That was tough win over Sac last night. For those guys (the 3 returning sophomores) to be part of winning the tournament twice in row and to beat Los Medanos, who is a pretty good team, that was special.

"To win 98-71 and hit 15 threes, to get that going since we hadn't shot really well, that was special. We played well defensively all weekend. We held teams to about 70 points a game. With the offensive guys we have, if we can do that, we'll be in a lot of games or win."

Offill acknowledged the play of the tournament MVP, Gabe Knight. "We know how good he is. He's a really, really good player. So for him to come home to Ukiah where he played some high school ball and he has roots here, to be MVP of the tournament, to average about 25 a game, with double-digit rebounds and be unselfish and a leader, he's a nice player for this program."

Offill also praised other players on the team who provide depth and quality play coming off the bench. "I think we have good depth. There are some guys on the team who could be playing 30 minutes on another team. We had a good weekend from guys like Freddie Bryant, Divon Davis-Boddie, Landon Garcia-Floyd and Kevin Deel. Deel had five threes. He could have gone for 30 on team that wasn't as talented.

"I thought it was a great team win. It's nice to be off to a 4-0 start and win your own tourney. I'm really happy for my group and I thought they deserve what they got, three wins in three days and protecting their home court. It was a great overall team victory. These guys deserve it. They put in a ton of work. They deserve the credit."