

SMU beats Cal 67-65, advance to NYC

Written by Administrator
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DALLAS (AP) — Hall of Fame coach Larry Brown is headed back to Madison Square Garden, this time taking his SMU Mustangs to the NIT semifinals.

Nic Moore provided one more dose of Moody Magic, getting a nice screen from Markus Kennedy on a seldom-used play to make a 3-pointer with 6.5 seconds left Wednesday night to push the Mustangs past California 67-65.

"We've run that play in practice every day. We haven't used it once in a game, maybe once that I can remember," Brown said. "We got a wide-open look. I wasn't thinking of a 3 to be honest with you. I was hoping we'd be able to post the ball, but we had a great shooter make a big shot and not be afraid of it."

SMU (26-9), snubbed by the NCAA tournament after its only three-game losing streak of the season, has rebounded with three consecutive NIT victories at home.

The Mustangs finished their first season 12-1 at the renovated Moody Coliseum, where the sellout crowd included former President George W. Bush and Dallas Cowboys quarterback Tony Romo.

Kennedy led the Mustangs with 19 points and 10 rebounds. Moore had 11 points, none bigger than the final shot a few steps in front of Brown.

Jabari Bird scored 15 of his 20 points after halftime, when Cal (21-14) had to overcome a seven-point deficit. Justin Cobbs had 18 points and David Kravish 12.

The Mustangs play Tuesday night against Clemson (23-12), the NIT's only non-No. 1 seed to make it to Madison Square Garden.

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SMU has played at Madison Square Garden only once, a 76-72 loss to St. John's on Dec. 7, 1950. The 73-year-old Brown has been there plenty of times as a coach, including as the New York Knicks coach in 2006-06 when they were 23-59. He returned several times later during his 2 ½ seasons with the Charlotte Bobcats.

"I don't know if they'll let me in," Brown said. "I did not feel good about New York because I didn't do a real good job coaching the Knicks. But for my team, growing up, we talked about this, the NIT was huge when I was a boy. ... I'm so thankful our kids are going to get to have that opportunity."

SMU regained the lead for the first time in more than 8 minutes when Nick Russell, one of two Mustangs seniors, made a reverse layup with 36 seconds left.

With the crowd on its feet — jumping up and down while screaming their loudest — Cobbs quieted them briefly when he made a 3-pointer with 15 seconds left to put the Golden Bears ahead.

Cobbs had one more chance, but his game-ending shot ricocheted off the rim as he fell to the ground in the Cal bench.

"It felt good actually," Cobbs said. "It just didn't go down."