



## **Kent State 73, Fairfield 71**

**First Round: March 20, 2013**

KENT, Ohio – Randal Holt flipped in a driving layup with three seconds to play to lift Kent State to a 73-71 win over Fairfield in Wednesday's first round of the CollegeInsider.com Postseason Tournament at the M.A.C. Center.

Almost two hours after the final buzzer, the Golden Flashes learned they would travel to Loyola University (Md.) for a second round game on Sunday at 3 p.m. While they waited for that news, they took some satisfaction in the fact that they are one of just three Mid-American Conference teams still playing in 2013.

"The guys who are on this team, we will not quit at Kent State," said Holt, who led Kent State with 18 points. "This is basketball. This is what we love to do. We didn't come here to quit or to fold, or to get discouraged because we are in the CIT. We have to come out and play."

Fairfield star Derek Needham guarded Holt on the game's deciding play, "and he was baiting me to go left," said Holt. "I went left and just put it up there. It's a great feeling to do it in front of the home fans one more time and to keep our season alive."

Holt scored 15 of his 18 points after halftime, improving to 6-for-13 from the field after an 0-for-4 first half. He also broke Kent State's single-season record for three-pointers late in the second half. His three three-pointers on Wednesday gave him 88 on the year, two more than D.J. Bosse made in 1996-97.

The game-winning layup gave Holt 1,404 points in his Golden Flashes' career. Only eight players have scored more in a Kent State uniform.

"What do you say? That's just Randal being Randal again," said Kent State head coach Rob Senderoff, whose team improved to 21-13 in his second season and matched its win total from a year ago. "But we also had a lot of other guys step up. Mark Henniger had a career record in rebounds with 10 ... Kellon Thomas really helped us on the defensive end, and Bryson Pope also really helped us on the defensive end."

Pope and Thomas also had an impact on offense, scoring 10 and eight points respectively. Pope added five rebounds as the Golden Flashes controlled the boards by a margin of 46-34.

Darren Goodson added 10 rebounds. And while the junior forward struggled from the field, shooting just 3-for-10 and scoring eight points, he hit a key driving basket with 34 seconds to play to give the Golden Flashes a three-point lead at 71-68.

Needham answered with a wide-open three to tie the game just 18 seconds later. The Fairfield senior led his team with 22 points in 38 minutes. Like Holt, Needham scored 15 of his total after the break. The Holt-Needham duel was reminiscent of Kent State's win at Fairfield in the second round of the 2011 National Invitation Tournament. Holt led all scorers with 22 in that game while Needham scored 20.

"Needham is a great player," said Senderoff. "He can really, really score. And he is a competitor, just like Randal. He didn't want to lose, just like Randal didn't want to lose."

The Stags trailed 36-26 at halftime, but they made life miserable for Kent State in the second half with their full-court pressure on defense and a suddenly high-powered offense that made 54.5-percent of its shots (18-for-33) in the final 20 minutes. The same offense that averaged just 60 points per game during the season scored 45 points in the second half alone on Wednesday.

"I'm very proud of our guys," said Fairfield coach Sydney Johnson. "We were down and it looked like we were down and out. But we rallied. Rob does a great job with Kent State, and they got a much deserved win. But I thought our guys were outstanding. It is bittersweet because we lost, but I couldn't be prouder of the effort."

Coleman Johnson added 18 points off the bench for the Stags, who finished their season at 19-16. Marcus Gilbert added 10 for Fairfield.