

GARDEN CITY LIFE **SPORTS**

Adelphi Men's Basketball Beats Southampton in OT

By Leslie Fjeffer

In their first overtime game of the season, the Adelphi Men's Basketball team beat LIU-Southampton by a margin of 93-84 on Saturday, Jan. 6. But the game was a lot closer than the score suggests.

Southampton's Colonials are a larger and more physically aggressive team than the Panthers, but that didn't stop the home team from taking a commanding 37-22 lead at the intermission. Although Southampton clogged the lane, the Panthers' ball-handling and passing skills carried them through the half. Adelphi has a reputation for getting around its lack of height with precise three-point shooting. Usually, if forced to the perimeter, the Panthers will make their opponents pay. However, that didn't happen here. In the first half, Adelphi connected on 23.1 percent from downtown (3-13).

"The first half, defensively, was the best that we played all year," Adelphi Head Coach Steve Clifford said. "We have had a problem with lulls in every game. We didn't come out strong in the second half, and then we just held them off a bit."

Point guard Danny Gimpel (tied for a game-high 27 points, tied for a game-high eight assists, five rebounds, game-high five steals) echoed his coach's thoughts about the difference in the first and second halves. When Coach Clifford heard him, he joked: "You know what it is? It's the halftime talk. From now on. I'm not talking at halftime."

Southampton came out shooting in the second half, picking up 12 points in the first four minutes. It was nearly five minutes into the period before the Panthers scored, with swingman Andrew Bridges connecting on two quick three-point baskets. Adelphi barely held onto their lead the rest of the way. With 3:22 left in the half, they scored their last points of regulation play, while the Colonials fought back from a 68-59 deficit, forcing the five-minute overtime.

So, how did the Panthers go from dominating the game to watching Southampton get back into it? Coach Clifford took part of the blame, admitting that some of the plays he called "took their aggressiveness

away. It looked like the kids were tentative, but it was really more my fault than theirs."

Forward Perry Herbert (tied for game-high 27 points, 11 rebounds, one assist, two steals) was targeted by Southampton's defense. During a second-half huddle, the Colonials' coach instructed his players to contain him. When told of this after the game, Herbert shrugged if off saying, "If you can't deal with the pressure, you shouldn't be on the court."

Gimpel was impressed with his teammate's grace under pressure on the tense overtime period. "When Perry hit that three-pointer in overtime (with 3:21 left in OT) and smiled, I knew then that we were going to win," the guard said.

What added to the tension near the end of the game was Southampton's loud cheering section. Their women's team beat Adelphi's just before this game, then stayed to provide some noise. As the second half wound down, they screamed "Dee-Fense, Dee-Fense" every time the Panthers had the ball. They jeered and trash-talked whenever an Adelphi player was at the foul line, drowning out the home crowd. In spite of this, the Panthers remained focused and scored nine points from the free throw line — which was their margin of victory.

However, not all members of the Southampton contingent were hostile. Among the spectators was New Jersey Nets forward Armon Gilliam. He came to the game to support his old friend, ex-New York Nick Sidney Green, who is the first-year coach of the Colonials. Although an NCAA Division II game doesn't feature NBA-type talent, Gilliam was impressed by what he saw. "I thought that they played with a lot of passion and that it was a well-coached game. You can always appreciate guys who are out there working hard, making good moves on the floor," he said.

The Nets forward remarked that the Panthers "have a lot of good shooters, some athletic players. They seem to work hard and hustle — and that'll take them a long way." Adelphi will have the chance to prove this when they host NYCAC rivals Philadelphia Textile on Saturday, Jan. 13, at 7 p.m.