

Tennessee and Gonzaga to face off in Phoenix

By STEVE MEGARGE
Associated Press

KNOXVILLE, Tenn. — Tennessee wants to capitalize on a second chance to beat an elite opponent as the Volunteers adapt to the higher expectations accompanying their Top 10 ranking.

The seventh-ranked Vols (6-1) let a golden opportunity slip away two weeks ago when they squandered a second-half lead in an 87-81 overtime loss to No. 2 Kansas. They're hoping the lessons learned that night pay off Sunday when they play No. 1 Gonzaga (9-0) at the Jerry Colangelo Classic in Phoenix.

"I thought we were a little too emotional at the beginning of that (Kansas) game," Tennessee coach Rick Barnes said. "Hopefully, we won't be like that going forward."

The Tennessee-Gonzaga game is part of a doubleheader that has No. 6 Nevada (8-0) facing Grand Canyon (5-3).

This game represents one more chance for Tennessee to make a statement and show it's a legitimate contender to make a run at a Final Four for the first time in program history.

Tennessee opened the year No. 6 in the Top 25 for its highest preseason ranking. Tennessee returned its top six scorers from a team that won a share of the Southeastern Conference regular-season title last year.

The Vols showed their potential last month by taking a nine-point, second-half lead over Kansas in the NIT Season Tip-Off in New York. Now they want to prove they can make the winning plays down the stretch against a national power.



Gonzaga head coach Mark Few instructs his players during the second half of an NCAA college basketball game against Washington in Spokane, Wash., on Wednesday. Gonzaga won 81-79.

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"The thing that separated us and Kansas was the execution later in the game and also just understanding the game plan, us knowing our roles and executing our game plan is the biggest thing," Tennessee forward Grant Williams said. "That's what a veteran team

should do. We didn't look like a veteran team in the Kansas game."

The Vols will face a Gonzaga team that's shown its veteran savvy on multiple occasions already this season.

Gonzaga blocked four shots in the last 46 seconds of an 89-87 victory over No. 3 Duke and erased a double-digit deficit in a 103-92 triumph at Creighton. The Bulldogs are facing Tennessee just four days after edging Washington 81-79 on

Rui Hachimura's turnaround jumper with six-tenths of a second remaining.

"Tennessee is a whole different type of challenge," Gonzaga coach Mark Few said after the Washington game. "They are so tough. They come at you and come at you and come at you. They can cause you fits."

Barnes considers Few a longtime friend and appreciates the Bulldogs' scheduling strategy. Barnes wanted to give Tennessee a national schedule when he took over

this program in 2015. He says two of the first coaches he called to set up high-profile nonconference matchups were Few and North Carolina's Roy Williams. Gonzaga beat Tennessee 86-79 in Seattle during the 2015-16 season and 86-76 the following year in Nashville, Tennessee.

"To be the program we want to be, I think you've got to be willing to play a really demanding schedule," Barnes said. "You look at Gonzaga, Mark's always

NCAA MEN'S



No. 7. Tennessee Volunteers (6-1)



No. 1 Gonzaga Bulldogs (9-0)

Noon in Phoenix
TV: ESPN

done that. His conference play is a little different, but you have to respect the fact he's willing to go anywhere to play."

This game features an intriguing matchup between Gonzaga's potent offense and Tennessee's stingy defense. Gonzaga averages 96.4 points and shoots 53 percent from the floor. Opponents have shot just 35.5 percent against Tennessee.

Tennessee has a history of scaring top-ranked teams. The Vols have split their last eight matchups with teams ranked No. 1 in the nation. Their most recent victory over a top-ranked team was a 76-68 upset of Kansas on Jan. 10, 2010.

With three of the top seven teams playing in the same building Sunday, Williams expects a postseason type of atmosphere similar to what the Vols encountered when they faced Kansas in Brooklyn.

"It's something that we weren't used to at the time," Williams said. "Now we've experienced it so we'll be able to go through it and attack it with a better mindset."

Jones, Kavas score 26 apiece as Seattle tops Omaha 90-71

SEATTLE (AP) — Delante Jones and Matej Kavas scored 26 points apiece and Seattle shot 61 percent from the floor in the second half to pull away for a 90-71 victory over Omaha on Thursday night.

Jones made 9 of 14 shots from the floor, including 4 of 7 from 3-point range, on his way to a career-high total. Kavas' point total was a season high and one point off his career best. Kavas sank 7 of 12 shots, including 6 of

9 from distance, and added six rebounds. Terrell Brown pitched in with 12 points, 11 rebounds and five assists for the Redhawks (9-2), who finished with a 9-1 record on a 10-game homestand.

Jones hit back-to-back

3-pointers in the final 39 seconds of the first half to give Seattle a 39-35 lead at intermission. Zach Jackson hit two free throws to pull the Mavericks (3-6) within 57-54 with 11:30 left to play, but Jones and Kavas

scored four points each in a 10-1 run and the Redhawks cruised from there.

KJ Robinson led Omaha with 17 points, while sophomore Matt Pile notched his second double-double of the season with 10 points and 11

rebounds.

Seattle picked up its sixth straight win and is off to its best start since returning to Division I play. The last time the Redhawks started 9-2 as a D-I team was during the 1968-69 season.

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