



Pirates come calling on 23rd-ranked Orange

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Syracuse, NY (SportsNetwork.com) - The 23rd-ranked Syracuse Orange continue play in the 2K Sports Classic, as they welcome the Hampton Pirates to town for a non-conference matchup at the Carrier Dome on Sunday afternoon.

Jim Boeheim's Orange have a much different look than last year's team that won 28 games, but if early indications are accurate, Syracuse should be able to pile up the wins once again during the 2014-15 campaign. The Orange opened their season on Friday and made light work of the Kennesaw State Owls in the opening round of the 2K Sports Classic, with an 89-42 rout.

Edward Joyner Jr.'s sixth season at Hampton did not get off to a rousing start, as the Pirates were easily defeated at Iowa on Friday in their opener, 90-56. Hampton won 18 games a year ago and posted an impressive 13-3 record in the MEAC, where the Pirates will attempt to navigate through successfully thanks to the return of four starters.

This bout marks the first-ever meeting between these two schools in men's basketball.

Dwight Meikle was 6-of-11 from the floor and paced the Pirates with 14 points, but it wasn't nearly enough in a lopsided loss to Iowa in the season-opener. Meikle was joined in double figures by Quinton Chievous and Brian Darden, who finished with 12 and 10 points respectively. Chievous just missed a double-double with nine rebounds although the Pirates were outrebounded as a team, 48-32. Overall, Hampton struggled to find an offensive rhythm, shooting just .339 from the floor overall, including .222 from behind the arc (4-of-18).

It was really a strong showing by Meikle, who averaged just under six points per game a year ago. The team will definitely need more from its backcourt of Deron Powers and Darden this season. Despite Darden's 10 points, he was just 2-of-8 from the floor in the game. Powers, who averaged nearly 12 points per game a year ago, was shut out, going 0-of-4 from the floor and 0-of-1 from the free-throw line in just 19 minutes of work.

Despite shooting a mere .349 from the floor in the first half, Syracuse took a 20-point lead (36-16) into halftime of its game against Kennesaw State. The Orange caught fire after the break though, converting on 21-of-32 field-goal attempts (.656) to win going away. Rakeem Christmas led all scorers with 21 points and just missed a double-double with nine rebounds. Chris McCullough and Tyler Roberson were able to complete the feat though, as McCullough finished with 16 points and 11 boards, while Roberson put up 10 points and 10 rebounds in the win. B.J. Johnson (19 pts, 8 rebs) was strong off the bench, while Trevor Cooney (12 pts) got into the act as well.

This season, Boeheim is looking to another freshman to facilitate and youngster Kaleb Joseph played to mixed reviews in the opener, as he posted four points, six assists and four turnovers in 23 minutes of work. The dominance of the young guys up front is more encouraging, as the freshman McCullough and sophomore Roberson and Johnson could be poised for strong campaigns, especially in the top-heavy ACC. Throw in veterans like Cooney (redshirt junior) and Christmas (senior) and Boeheim has a nice balanced roster that should once again dominate for stretches of the season.