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Syracuse basketball stunned by California at Garden in 2K Classic

Jordan Mathews had 22 points and Jabari Bird had 16 points as Cal sliced up the Syracuse 2-3 zone with passes into the high post to set up clear shots from all parts of the court.

BY ROGER RUBIN

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Syracuse head coach Jim Boeheim protests a call as Cal crushes the Orange Thursday.

Chris McCullough's dream scenario is surely going to give him nightmares.

The Syracuse freshman, who grew up in the Bronx, finally got to realize his dream of playing a college game in the Garden Thursday night when the 23rd-ranked Orange faced California in a 2K Classic semifinal. He never envisioned his team on the wrong end of a lopsided loss.

Cal made eight three-pointers including four unanswered ones in less than two minutes as it broke away from a close game and ended up rolling to a 73-59 victory. The Orange trailed by double digits for the entire second half.

"I was looking forward to this and I was happy to be back in New York," McCullough said. "We just didn't get the win."

The Golden Bears (3-0), now coached by Cuonzo Martin who took Tennessee the Sweet 16 in March, will meet No. 10 Texas Friday night in the championship game. Syracuse (2-1) meets Iowa in the 5 p.m. consolation game.



ROBERT SABO/NEW YORK DAILY NEWS

Syracuse guard Kaleb Joseph looks for an open man.

Jordan Mathews had 22 points and Jabari Bird had 16 points as Cal sliced up the Syracuse 2-3 zone with passes into the high post to set up clear shots from all parts of the court.

“We wanted to run everything through the high post,” Mathews said. “It’s where we wanted the (action) and it worked.”

Michael Gbinije and Kaleb Joseph each scored 13 for Syracuse. McCullough ended up with a solid line: 12 points on 5-for-9 shooting with seven rebounds and five blocked shots.

But Syracuse lost a lot of talent the past two seasons – Tyler Ennis, Jerami Grant and C.J. Fair last season and Michael Carter-Williams the year before – and it is showing.



ROBERT SABO/NEW YORK DAILY NEWS

Orange fans can't believe their 23rd-ranked team is upset at MSG.

“You can’t lose guys like we did last year and play the way we did last year,” Orange coach Jim Boeheim said. “We got only (22) points in the first half. This game wasn’t about our defense. . . . It’s going to take some time. Right now we’re not ready to score like we need to.”

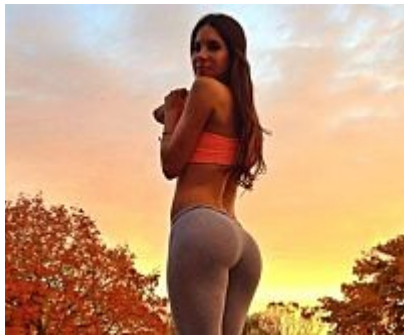
Boeheim does believe it will eventually happen and McCullough is potentially going to be a big part of it.

“He weighs 210 pounds and people are going to be physical with him,” Boeheim said. “Chris has really good basketball skills but he is not physical enough for the college game.”

He added the Hakim Warrick was very similar in his freshman year before blossoming. “With big guys it’s like that,” he said.

No. 10 Texas 71, Iowa 57: Senior Jonathan Holmes scored 17 of his 19 points as the Longhorns outscored the Hawkeyes by 20 in the final 20 minutes. He had five points and Isaiah Taylor four in a decisive 13-0 run that put Texas (3-0) up 56-43 with 8:04 to play. Texas was down as much as 12 points in the first half, trailed 30-24 at the break. Taylor finished with 15 points but came down hard on his left wrist on a flagrant foul by Iowa’s Gabriel Olaseni that resulted in his ejection. His status for the title game is uncertain. Aaron White scored 23 for Iowa (2-1).

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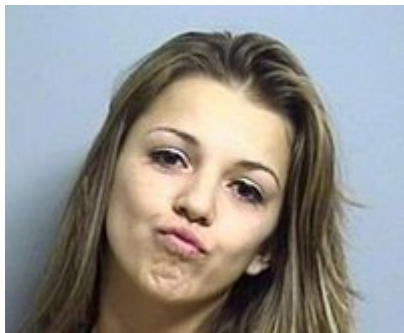
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