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Syracuse Basketball Vine Rewind: The Bad & Good From The 2K Classic

By [Jared E. Smith](#) [@JaredSmithCNY](#) on Nov 24 2014, 3:00p [7](#)



Jim O'Connor-USA TODAY Sports

The Orange left their hoops fans a bit disappointed last week, as they lost to Cal and earned a tight victory over Iowa in the 2K Classic. Here's a recap of what SU did bad and well at Madison Square Garden.

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The [Syracuse Orange](#) fan base is a few days removed from an up-and-down men's basketball showing at the 2K Classic last Thursday and Friday in New York City. The Orange (3-1) looked very raw in a [73-59 loss](#) to the [California Golden Bears](#) in the semifinals, but quickly redeemed themselves with a [tight victory, 66-63](#), over the [Iowa Hawkeyes](#) in the consolation game.

For the most part, Syracuse fans will not remember the two-day stretch fondly. Cal seemingly did what it wanted on offense making eight 3-pointers which helped the Bears sink 46% of their overall shots.

The Orange committed 11 turnovers in their Thursday loss, seven of them coming from their first-year players [Kaleb Joseph](#) (four) and [Chris McCullough](#) (three).

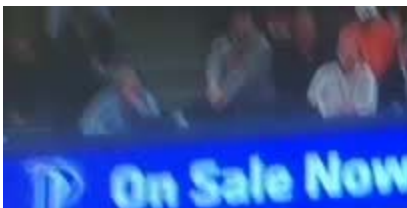
On Friday, SU earned a victory but it didn't come without some frustration. Leading by 15 eight minutes into the second half, the formerly nationally-ranked squad seemed to be in control. Yet, Iowa trimmed Syracuse's lead all the way to one point using the press and had a chance to take the lead until an Orange defense stop setup a McCullough dunk, which pushed the lead back to three points with about two minutes to go.

The win was a reminder of last season, which featured a lot of tight games that went SU's way. This one did too.

In the end, Syracuse left Madison Square Garden with a lot of uncertainty surrounding the team. Here's a quick "Vine Rewind" of what went bad and good for the Orange during the two-day stretch.

THE (REALLY) BAD happened during a 17-5 Cal run at the tail end of the first half. During the span, Syracuse did a lot of bad things like: not finish scoring opportunities, turn the ball over and fail to close out on Cal's shooters.

The player who benefited the most from SU's five-minute lapse was Cal's sophomore guard [Jabari Bird](#), who knocked down three 3-pointers during the Golden Bears' spurt. All the makes came from nearly the same spot on the floor—just outside NBA range.



The above sequence from the former McDonald's All-American was a part of Bird's 16-point performance that featured him making four of his five attempts from behind the 3-point line.

Now, Syracuse fans are well aware that at anytime one player can get hot and beat the 2-3 zone. That happens. It happened last Thursday during Cal's late, first-half run, which basically was enough to put Syracuse away because the Orange did a lot of this throughout the game:



Now, Syracuse's loss to Cal wasn't because they were just bad. The Golden Bears do deserve credit here as they moved the ball well and made open shots.



Another alarming issue for SU, out of the many, was the late-game play of freshman point guard Kaleb Joseph, who nearly cost the Orange a victory, but also somewhat saved them against Iowa on Friday as well.

In the final seven and a half minutes with Syracuse up by 11 points, Joseph's stat line: 0-for-3 on field goals (one being a head-shaking jumper with 40 second to go), a turnover, a rebound, an assist (a beauty that setup a dunk for McCullough with 2:21 to go) and three personal fouls (two helped close out the game in the closing seconds).

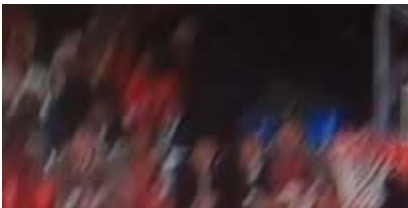
It is safe to say, Joseph is going to be a good player for Syracuse. He has the tools to do almost everything head coach Jim Boeheim wants out of a point guard, but he is a freshman, so there's going to be a lot of growing with him too. He is not [Tyler Ennis](#)... Yet.

For those keeping track, [Trevor Cooney](#) was 5-for-15 (33.3%) form behind the 3-point arc in the two games of the 2K Classic.

THE (PRETTY) GODD for Syracuse was in the first 10 minutes of the second half in the consolation game.

At halftime, Syracuse led 34-29 thanks to [Rakeem Christmas](#) and McCullough combining for 20 points, six rebounds and three blocks.

Already this season, we're seeing a different kind of Christmas, who has asserted himself as the Orange's "go-to" scoring threat. The senior is at his best when McCullough is helping out, doing so, by also being productive. Here's an brief example of what I am talking about:



The duo was also fantastic on the defense end, especially late in the game when Iowa had shrank the Orange's 15-point lead to three with just under two minutes remaining.



The duo also made free throws, as McCullough went 2-for-2 and Christmas went 1-for-2 in the closing moments from the charity stripe to help SU increase its lead to a heart-stopping one-point lead to a more comfortable three-point margin.

The two-man show is exciting, especially if SU can get it on a continuous bases. Christmas and McCullough are two athletes that many teams in the nation can't match up with, and their success will help the other struggling scorers.

Editors note: Moving forward Vine Rewind will be a weekly special during the basketball season. Feel free to send along suggestions of things to look for and breakdown. Your comments and observations are always welcomed.



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