Texas beats St. John's 77-76
Texas in third-place

box score

NEW YORK (AP) ---- Kevin Durant has had a pretty impressive start to his college career. Texas coach Rick Barnes has a different view.

"Kevin hasn't played well yet," Barnes said after the 6-foot-9 swingman scored 29 points to lead the 19th-ranked Longhorns to a 77-76 victory over St. John's on Friday night in the third-place game of the Coaches vs. Cancer Classic. "He is progressing well. In practice he's our best inside scorer and he has a terrific midcourt game. He is 200 miles from where he was two weeks ago. He's special."

Durant, who had 10 rebounds, has scored at least 20 points in every game for Texas.

"I'm surprised I'm getting so much play," he said. "This is a close-knit group and they get the ball to me and have a lot of confidence in me."

The one getting the ball to him most is fellow freshman D.J. Augustin. The point guard had 17 points, including Texas' last five of the game, and seven assists.

"It's a huge advantage for Durant to be playing with Augustin," Barnes said.

The Longhorns (3-1) were able to win a close one after losing 63-61 to Michigan State in the semifinals on a driving basket by Drew Neitzel with 2.4 seconds to play. This time, they weren't assured of the win until Anthony Mason Jr.'s long 3-point attempt with 1 second left bounced off the rim.

"We made mistakes coming down the stretch," Barnes said, "but the freshmen are fearless. I have confidence in them."

Augustin gave Texas the lead for good at 75-73 with two free throws with 1:55 to play. His driving scoop shot after he stole the ball from Lamont Hamilton made it 77-73, but he missed the free throw to complete the three-point play.

Eugene Lawrence's three-point play with 31 seconds left brought St. John's (2-2) within one point. Justin Mason, another of the freshmen who see extensive time for Texas, missed the front end of a 1-and-1 with 16 seconds left, but all St. John's could manage on its final possession was the long 3 by Mason.

"We got a good test," Augustin said. "We tried to make plays."

Avery Patterson had 22 points for St. John's and was 6-for-11 from 3-point range.

The Red Storm led 45-44 at halftime, a far cry from the 58-21 deficit they faced after 20 minutes in their 92-60 semifinal loss to Maryland.

"It was a lot better than last night. We didn't respond to the level of play against Maryland," Red Storm coach Norm Roberts said. "I can sleep a lot better tonight than I did last night."

The second half was one of swings for both teams, and Texas had the first one, opening with a 12-0 run as St. John's came up empty on its first eight possessions. Augustin started the run with a driving basket and capped it with a 3.

St. John's used a 10-0 run to tie the game at 60 with 10:36 to go, then went on a 7-0 spurt capped by Patterson's last 3 of the game to go up 69-64 with 7:13 left.

Durant finished 5-for-6 from 3-point range and his last one capped a 7-2 run that tied the game at 71 with 4:28 to go.

A.J. Abrams added 12 points for Texas, which was 10-for-18 on 3s at Madison Square Garden, one night after

going 7-for-26.

The first half couldn't have been any different for St. John's than it was Thursday night.

The Red Storm shot 59.4 percent (19-for-32) in the opening 20 minutes against Texas after going 7-for-33 (21 percent) against Maryland. On Friday, they were 7-for-11 on 3s, considerably better than the 2-for-11 against the Terrapins.

Patterson hit his first three 3s as the Red Storm jumped to a 13-2 lead.

"I was nervous last night. It was my first time in Madison Square Garden," the junior college transfer said. "Tonight, I was ready from the start. I just took what was given me."

The tournament is sponsored by 2K Sports.