

Koenig leads Badgers to thrilling win over VCU

NEW YORK (AP) - On Friday, Bronson Koenig had a nightmarish showing against a physical opponent.

Two days later, Koenig had a dream finish against an equally as physical foe.

Koenig scored 22 points and hit the go-ahead layup with eight seconds remaining and Wisconsin held off VCU for a 74-73 victory Sunday in the consolation game of the 2K Classic at Madison Square Garden.

The junior guard rebounded from a 2-for-12 showing in Friday's 10-point loss to Georgetown by shooting 9-of-14 coming within one of his career high. He had 16 in the first half and was mostly quiet in the second half until Wisconsin's final possession.

The Badgers blew a six-point lead in the final five minutes and faced a 73-72 deficit when Melvin Johnson hit a mid-range jumper with 32 seconds remaining. Following a timeout, Nigel Hayes found a cutting Koenig, who spun through traffic and scooped in a layup.

"It was me and Nigel on the left wing and then everyone else kind of cleared out," Koenig said. "My defender made it really hard all game for me to do anything, really. He was just jumping in front of me. I saw he was trying to take away Nigel, and that pass would've been pretty hard to make. He overplayed me. I've always learned if they overplay you, you just give them one move and go to the rim. He cut me off and I just spun back."

The Rams still had time to get the win but Johnson missed a 3-pointer with one second remaining and the Badgers (3-2) had the win.

"Koenig just drove us and he got a little bit too deep," VCU coach Will Wade said of the final play. "We've been stopping him at 15 feet when he shoots that little pull up. He got a little bit too deep and was able to wiggle it in there."

Johnson scored 21 points for VCU (2-2), which rallied from a trio of 11-point deficits in the first half but shot 32 percent in the second half.

Koenig's big performance came on a day when Nigel Hayes struggled to get in the flow at times. After scoring 22 Friday, Hayes took five shots and missed five of 10 free throws but still the original plan was to get him the ball on the final possession.

"We were looking for Nigel inside," Wisconsin coach Bo Ryan said. "He had made some plays, a two-shot foul and a couple good dishes from the post. When he gets it down there, he's pretty effective with the ball, not just for the scorer but for the actions he can get out of it. He's a very good passer from there and he knows how to get to the line."

Ethan Happ added 12 while Zak Showalter contributed 10 for Wisconsin, which shot 53.1 percent.

Johnson was the only VCU starter in double figures. Reserves Korey Billbury and Ahmed Hamdy-Mohamed added 17 and 13 respectively.

Wisconsin held three 11-point leads early in the first half but trailed 43-37 at halftime. The Rams took their first lead at 33-32 on a layup by Hamdy-Mohamed with 3:36 remaining and outscored the Badgers 12-5 the rest of the first half.