

Virginia Tech beats Detroit Mercy 111-79 in season opener

By JORDAN HUTCHINSON

BLACKSBURG, Va. (AP) — Nickeil Alexander-Walker scored 24 points, Kerry Blackshear Jr. added 23 and Virginia Tech beat Detroit Mercy 111-79 on Friday night in a season opener.

Alexander-Walker, a six-foot-five freshman guard, was 9-of-14 shooting with four 3-pointers. Blackshear was 7 of 10 from the field and made 8 of 10 free throws. Ahmed Hill added 19 points, and Devin Wilson and P.J. Horne chipped in 10 points apiece.

"My teammates gave me confidence," said Alexander-Walker. "It was also the offense. My teammates making the extra pass, we were just flowing. I guess the way we move the ball well opened up spots for me and made things a lot easier."

Kameron Chatman scored 23 points to lead Detroit Mercy.

Chatman made a 3-pointer to pull the Titans to 31-29 with 7:19 to play in the first half. Tyrie Jackson and Horne answered with back-to-back layups as the Hokies closed on a 23-9 run for a 52-42 halftime lead.

It's one of those situations where we've been working all week long on trying to get back," said Detroit coach Bacari Alexander. "The only solution in a game like this is to send all five players back on defense, and that might not be enough with the quickness and skill they have."

Alexander-Walker opened the second half with a 3-pointer and layup to spark a 10-0 spurt and the Hokies cruised from there.

It was also the first game for both teams in the 2K Classic benefiting the Wounded Warrior Project. The Hokies face Saint Louis in New York on Thursday and Detroit Mercy plays Seattle in Nashville, Tennessee on Nov. 18 in the tournament's next round.

BIG PICTURE

Detroit Mercy: The Titans at times showed strength and athleticism, especially down low. It was just a different level of basketball in Blacksburg against the Hokies. Detroit Mercy did have a bright spot; however, as junior guard/forward Chatman seemed to have it going early, and capitalized on poor defensive stretches from the Hokies.

Virginia Tech: There's good news and bad news for Tech. The good news: Tech scored 111 points and Alexander-Walker lived up to the hype in his debut. He showed flashes of athleticism and his ability to score effortlessly. The bad news: They allowed 79 points.

BACK FROM INJURY

Forward Chris Clarke looked limited in his return from last season's ACL injury. He finished with nine points, five rebounds and four assists.