

No. 3 Villanova Opens With 76-67 Win Over Boston College

UNCASVILLE, Conn. (AP) — Jeremiah Robinson-Earl spent much of the first half of Villanova's season opener on the bench with two early fouls.

He was the difference in the second half, scoring 14 of his 18 points as the Wildcats overcame a nine-point deficit to beat Boston College 76-67 on Wednesday night in the first round of the Empire Classic.

"We're definitely a different team when Jeremiah's on the floor," coach Jay Wright said.

Collin Gillespie added 15 points and Justin Moore and Caleb Daniels each had 14 for the Wildcats, who will play Arizona State in the tournament championship game Thursday.

Jay Heath scored 16 points and Makai Ashton-Langford added 15 for Boston College.

The teams were tied at 34 going into halftime and the underdog Eagles grabbed the momentum early in the second half.

A 3-pointer from Quinnipiac transfer Rich Kelly capped an 8-0 run that gave BC a 49-41 lead, and a 3 by Ashton-Langford extended that to 57-48 with 13 minutes left.

But the Wildcats responded by going on an 11-1 run.

"We just keep playing hard," Robinson-Earl said. "Don't let the score dictate how we play. It's a long game, so there's a lot of time to get stops, be patient on offense and just keep playing together."

A jumper by Gillespie put the Wildcats back on top 59-58 and Villanova took the lead for good at 63-61 on a hook shot by Moore with just over six minutes left.

Villanova outscored Boston College 6-1 over the final three minutes to seal it.

The Empire Classic was moved from its traditional home in New York to become part of an 11-day event dubbed "Bubbleville," being played inside the Mohegan Sun resort casino in Connecticut.

Each program is given its own floor in the resort's hotel tower and the teams are using back-of-house passageways to avoid the gaming floor and other guests.