

Temple breaks Cincinnati's home winning streak with 77-69 victory

by Mike Kern
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CINCINNATI — So now we know.

Temple is not simply the best team in the Atlantic 10. This is John Chaney's best team since 1988. The Final Four is no longer a mere dream, because the quality of the opposition is no longer a question mark. Temple is a big-time player.

Just ask Cincinnati coach Bob Huggins.

When you beat the nation's No. 1 team in February on the road, people tend to notice. The Owls (20-4), who beat Maryland eight days ago and won at A-10 West-leading Dayton Thursday, capped off one of the more memorable weeks in Chaney's tenure Sunday at the Shoemaker Center.

They overcame a six-point deficit in the final eight minutes to claim a nationally televised 77-69 win over a Cincinnati club that had won 42 straight at Shoemaker.

The Bearcats (24-2) were also riding a 16-game winning streak, and Chaney was still able to notch his 400th win in 18 seasons at Temple.

"I thought coming in they were a top-five team," said Huggins, whose team lost to Temple for the third straight time in four seasons. "I don't know who's ranking them 15th. There are other people I'd rather play, if I had my druthers."

The Owls, who were 11th in the Ratings Percentage Index, have won their last 11. They're 15-1 with senior lead guard Pepe Sanchez in the lineup, the lone blemish a one-point loss at St. Bonaventure on Jan. 15.

Sanchez wasn't supposed to play in this one, after suffering a sprained left ankle during the second half at Dayton. But he did, despite not practicing on Friday or Saturday. Assistant trainer Richard Clarke should receive a bonus — or at least an Armani tie from Chaney's extensive collection. Without Sanchez, the Owls' chances of winning this one would have diminished considerably.

"No way," said Chaney. "He's an old-fashioned point guard, is all he is. He has so much ability at running a team."

The Owls, who host St. Bonaventure Thursday, did turn it over 14 times, one off their season high. Sanchez had four, all in the first half. The Owls trailed at the break, 34-33, and Sanchez, who played the entire second half, wasn't 100 percent. He didn't have to be. His presence was enough.

"He's our leader," said Mark Karcher. "I want him out there. He brings it, keeps us with the script. We didn't want to lose."

Lynn Greer came off the bench and kept the Owls in it through the first 20 minutes, making all five of his three-pointers, including a one-hander at the end he launched from the Kentucky border. He would not score again.

But Karcher would. Karcher — who had just five points in last season's 64-54 NCAA Tournament win over Cincinnati — had 22 of his game-high 28 points in the second half, against Cincy's defensive stopper, Pete Mickeal, who had a lot to say before the game about how he was going to handle Karcher.

Afterward, Karcher had his turn.

"You could see it in his eyes that he didn't really want to play me," he said, matter-of-factly.

Temple trailed by seven with 9 1/2 minutes to go. On the next 10 possessions, Karcher either took the shot or made it to the foul line on all but two. When it was over, six minutes later, the Owls were up one, 62-61, on a Karcher trey from the right wing. Quincy Wadley, off his own steal, then swished a foul-line jumper and followed with a second-chance three. The lead grew to seven, at 1:08, on two Wadley free throws.

Cincinnati, which picked a bad time to go 5 1/2 minutes between field goals, cut it to five on a layup by Mickeal with a minute showing. Moments later, Player of the Year favorite Kenyon Martin (13 points, 10 rebounds, one block) missed a baseline jumper that could have made it a four-point game, and Temple converted six of eight at the line in the final 42 seconds.

According to the school's records, it's the first time the Owls have beaten a top-ranked team on the road. The only other time they've knocked off No. 1 anywhere was Dec. 22, 1995, when they downed Kansas in overtime at the Meadowlands.

That one was a Kodak moment, in what was a 2-5 month. This one will have serious impact with the NCAA Tournament Selection Committee. If the Owls run the table, they're probably looking at a No. 2 seed March, when the Madness resumes in a little more than three weeks.

"We've beaten some good teams this year," said Karcher, who certainly gave the pro scouts a lot more to think about. "But games like this are different. This is what you look at when the schedule comes out. We're playing our best, right now. But



TMS PHOTO
University of Cincinnati senior and national player of the year candidate Kenyon Martin

we've got to keep building. To me, we're looking at the big picture.

March is coming, and it would be something to tell my grandkids one day that I helped get coach to his first Final Four."

A lot of things can happen between now and Indianapolis. But at least the Owls, who made it to the Final Eight for the fourth time in 11 seasons last March, have earned the right to bring it up.

"Cincinnati's a great team," said Sanchez. "The plan was to stick with them until the end, put pressure on them and play our best the last five minutes. We beat them the last two times. It's a tough game, but not a lot of college basketball teams have as tough a mind as we do. After you listen to coach every day for three, four years, there's not a thing that can scare you."

Cincinnati, which had won its last seven against Top 25 opponents, hadn't allowed anyone to shoot 50 percent since March 7, 1998. The Owls were 25-for-48 from the floor, 12-for-22 from the arc. Temple also had two more rebounds (32-30). Cincy

is supposed to know how the Owls play. Obviously, that cuts both ways.

"Maybe so," said Bearcats freshman guard DerMarr Johnson (team-high 16 points), when asked if the Bearcats had blinked. Temple "hit a lot of big shots that sort of broke our heart. Some were unbelievable."

"It's kind of frustrating. They play their (matchup) zone to perfection. That's why they do it."

What's not to believe now?

"Both teams are great programs," said Chaney. "Irrespective of the outcome, it says a lot about how your team measures up. Bobby shouldn't be ashamed. This might be the best thing that could happen to them."

"Our kids carry a lot of pride around with them. We walk away knowing we can win this game. But you can't take it too far out of context here."

You can take it any way you want. And you can take it a long way.

"I think there's already a lot of respect for our program," Sanchez said. "We don't need to make any statement. There's nothing else to say."

head we all fear: the temple....

"Are we breaking new ground? Sure, when it comes to the number of games. But have you seen anything like that? I haven't."

The suspension is two games longer than the punishment levied against the Washington Capitals' Dale Hunter for a blind-side hit on

assault charges, McSorley took the advice of counsel and did not attend a hearing Wednesday in New York before Campbell and William Daly, the NHL's chief legal counsel. He had requested a postponement, but NHL officials said a delay would not have served Brashears best interests or those of the league.

Daly said he spoke with Vancouver police officials and intends to cooperate with their investigation. McSorley could face a maximum of 14 years in jail if convicted of aggravated assault, but Daly said he hopes law enforcement agencies will let the NHL police itself.

Daly also said the suspension was opened because the league wants to hear McSorley's version of the incident. McSorley apologized to Brashears, the Bruins and hockey fans Monday night but has not commented publicly since.

His remorse was not enough to prevent Campbell from ending his season and, perhaps, his 17-year career.

McSorley, 36, is the third-most penalized player in NHL history. He

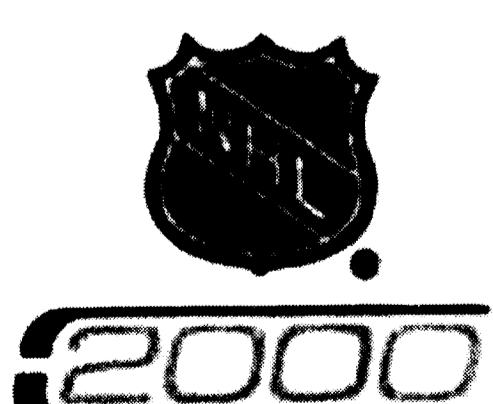
was Wayne Gretzky's bodyguard on two Stanley Cup-winning teams in Edmonton before accompanying Gretzky to Los Angeles in the landmark 1988 trade between the Oilers and Kings. Before this, he was perhaps best known for being caught with an illegal stick during Game 2 of the 1993 Stanley Cup finals,

giving the Montreal Canadiens a power play that helped them tie the score and the series and defeat the Kings in five games.

"He's a player who came into the league and made it strictly on his toughness and became a pretty good hockey player," Campbell said. "... It's unfortunate this incident will probably be his legacy."

Mighty Duck left wing Stu Grimson, who has been a feared enforcer for 12 seasons, said he felt sorry for Brashears and empathized with McSorley but condemned the hit.

"It was as brutal an act as I've ever seen playing the sport of hockey," said Grimson, who has been suspended twice by the NHL, for three games, and fined once. "I've seen in the past where he wanted to get back at someone. I've been in the position where he wanted to get back at me. But I've never seen him do anything like what he did."



New York Islander center Pierre Turgeon during the 1993 playoffs. McSorley, a seven-time offender who has not been sanctioned since 1994, will forfeit \$72,000 of his \$600,000 salary to the Players' Emergency Assistance Fund. The Bruins were six points out of an Eastern Conference playoff spot before they played Wednesday at Edmonton.

Because he may face criminal

Bulls acquire Starks in 3-team trade; send Kukoc to Sixers

by Sam Smith
Chicago Tribune
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CHICAGO — And then there were none.

With apologies to Randy Brown and Dickey Simpkins, the final link to the great Bulls championship teams of the 1990s, Toni Kukoc, was traded Wednesday to the Philadelphia 76ers in a three-way deal.

In addition to a conditional No. 1 draft pick that could be a lottery pick this season, the Bulls also get longtime nemesis John Starks from Golden State and little-used Bruce Bowen from Philadelphia.

The Warriors received second-year guard Larry Hughes and veteran forward Billy Owens from the 76ers.

Starks, the former Knicks bad guy, is a player well known to Bulls fans. But the appeal to the Bulls is the No. 1 draft pick, which the Warriors obtained from Washington in the Tom Gugliotta-Chris Webber trade of 1995.

Golden State has lottery protection through the top three picks, which means if Washington — currently with the fifth poorest record in the NBA — manages to jump up to one of the top three picks, the Warriors will keep it and their No. 1 pick in 2001 will belong to the Bulls unconditionally.

The Bulls run the risk that the Michael Jordan-operated Wizards will improve dramatically if they get a top draft pick. That could make the No. 1 pick in 2001 worth considerably less.

Nevertheless, Bulls General Manager Jerry Krause is confident the deal vastly improves the Bulls' future prospects.

"I felt we had a couple of objectives," Krause said. "We wanted to get to that \$18 million mark (under the salary cap) where we didn't have to make another move, although things can still happen next week."

The trading deadline is Feb. 24 and the Bulls are expected to try to deal Starks. Miami, which is here to play the Bulls on Thursday, has expressed interest.

Krause said being \$18 million under the cap will give the Bulls a shot at two "quality" free agents. He was near tears as he explained the deal to reporters; Kukoc was a personal favorite. Dealing him, Krause said, would require "a star we thought could play here eight to 10 years, or a high lottery pick that could bring a player here for eight to 10 years. The third option was to keep Toni and find another way to get the other \$9 million under for a player.

"If it breaks right, we'll have the No. 1 and No. 4 picks," Krause said. "If not, we could have three and six. If it's one of the top three, we have it free and clear next year and it's also an asset when it comes to trading."

Krause emphasized that the deal was made with the future in mind.

"We've taken another step in what is a step-by-step process to getting where we want to be," he said. "We've said all along we wanted the financial ability to sign two free agents, we wanted to get younger and get additional draft choices. We now have two outstanding young players in Elton Brand and Ron Artest, a couple of others in Michael Ruffin and Chris Anstey and we could add a couple of major free agents and have those No. 1 draft picks."

The third is San Antonio's from the Steve Kerr trade.

"It was very difficult to trade Toni," Krause said. "There were tears today. When I told Toni I said, 'I need a hug.' He gave me a hug. He took it great."

Kukoc, 31, was stunned by the deal. He had heard the rumors for weeks, though he hoped to stay signed with the Bulls. He told friends he thought the Bulls could be back

to contending for a playoff spot in two years and he believed he could help in that process.

But the Bulls' priority was to get the salary-cap space to pursue free agents. Unable to trade Hersey Hawkins, they felt it necessary to deal Kukoc, who expects to play for the 76ers on Friday and will face Phil Jackson's Lakers on Sunday.

"That's the NBA," Kukoc said. "It's the business. There's nothing I can do. Philadelphia is a good basketball team, going for the playoffs."

"I had great years here in Chicago, great moments. I made plenty of friends. When you are in one place for so long it is not easy to leave. Unfortunately I have to. But I will remember those championship teams. Those are teams that probably never will be forgotten for what they accomplished. I guess I will always have a warm welcome when I come back."

The 76ers have been desperate for another scoring option to complement Allen Iverson. But Kukoc will be a free agent after the season, so they're taking a chance on whether they can re-sign him.

"There have been no promises made to Philadelphia," said Herb Rudy, Kukoc's attorney. "They'll have to make Toni very happy."

And Kukoc isn't saying what will.

"I have the summer to think about decisions," he said. "We'll see how I'm going to like Philadelphia as much as Chicago. You never know. I have three, four good years left. The European option is never out of my plan. It is a luxury I have. I have a good two, three months to think about it and bring the best decision to my family."

But the 76ers are hopeful Kukoc will trade Broad Shoulders for Brotherly Love.

"We're not doing this as a short-term thing," Philadelphia General Manager Billy King said. "Our goal is to have Toni Kukoc finish his career here. I told him, 'I think you are a piece that will help us continue to go in the right direction.'"

Whether this is the right direction for the Bulls remains to be seen. In the short-term, they could revert to the team that started the season 2-26. Starks, 34, has missed 14 games with knee problems and Bowen is a throw-in who will probably be released.

"Initially it's going to be a burden," Bulls coach Tim Floyd said, noting the team's 8-12 record since Kukoc's return. "We've gone through this with adding Khalid Reeves, Matt Maloney, Chris Carr. Toni really helped us over the course of the last 20 games and we really struggled without him. He really helped Elton (Brand) and Ron (Artest) and everyone else."

"You take away our leading scorer, but you have to look at the big picture we've been talking about all along. Quicker in this league means trying to do it quicker than other teams that have got back to a championship level. Boston still hasn't gotten back there, neither has Detroit. I don't think any team that's been through a rebuild has had the benefit of picks in the top 16 (in two years), and now we can try to get two, 21/2 free agents to go with that, so I remain encouraged about our future."

But it's always difficult on the survivors.

"You're sad to see him leave," B.J. Armstrong said. "As a teammate, you share a lot of moments on and off the floor. But Toni will be the first one to tell you he understands the business."

And the recent history of the Bulls.

"It doesn't last forever," Simpkins said. "Guys retire and get traded. It was Toni, me and Randy left. Slowly but surely, the guys are disappearing."