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Davis Byrd | dbyrd16@email.radford.edu

Radford's Men's Basketball took on the Gardner-Webb Bulldogs in a Big South Basketball showdown.

The Thursday night showdown pitted the 14-9 Highlanders, tied for first in the standings, against an 11-12 Gardner-Webb team in a game that would have significant implications near the top of the standings.

The Highlanders held a 35-32 lead after the first period, led by Junior Ed Polite Jr.'s 11 points; the Highlanders' highest lead of the period was 7 points.

Ball security and hustle seemed to be the primary points stressed by Head Coach Mike Jones to his players as they only turned the ball over two times to the Bulldog's six first-half turnovers. The Highlanders showed tremendous hustle, diving on every loose ball while being active and energetic, often smothering the Bulldogs on defense, pressing up at half-court.

The Highlanders had a bit of a shaky start to the second half, surrendering their lead as they could not get much to fall for them. A quick run sparked by Polite's one basket around the hole, followed by his dunk in transition, got the fans involved with the season-high crowd at the Dedmon Center roaring for their Highlanders.

This burst from the Junior forward sent the Highlanders on a serious run, and another quick basket in transition restored the advantage for Radford and forced Gardner-Webb into a timeout, surrounded by screams of praise for the home team.

The game seemed to be one of the trading punches, with the Highlanders only holding a three-point lead going into the final 60 seconds of the contest. Gardner-Webb cut the lead to just one point but was forced to foul to keep any hopes of a comeback alive.

Both free throws were made, and Radford held a 3-point lead during the dying embers of the contest. A missed 3-pointer rebounded by #32 led to a foul and a free throw to ice the

game. The Highlanders were led in scoring for the game by the teams forward, Polite, who had 22 in the contest on an impressive .615% shooting.

Turnovers seemed to be a significant deciding factor in an exciting end-to-end basketball game. The most significant lead of the game was just 10 points and was held by the Highlanders. The Highlanders turned the ball over 14 times to Gardner-Webb's 19, racking up eight steals in the process.

Every Highlander involved put in a great effort as each player put up a shot and nine scored. Radford's win in this pivotal Big South conference game improves the Highlanders record to 15-9 overall and 8-3 in the conference. The Highlanders strong season already surpasses their win total of 14 and of 8 in conference play.

The Highlander's next home game will be against High Point on Wednesday, Feb. 7 at the Dedmon Center. The Highlanders will look to ride the momentum from this win to keep rising in the Big South standings. The Highlanders sit atop the Big South as joint leaders but will attempt to distance themselves as the top team in the Big South.

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