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The Dedmon Center was packed to the rafters Thursday night as the Highlanders held off the Winthrop Eagles 87-81 to maintain their spot atop the Big South Conference rankings at 11-2.

‘Na Na Na Na Hey Hey Hey Goodbye Winthrop’

This meeting between Radford and Winthrop mirrored their first matchup earlier in the season. In both games, Radford trailed by two going into the halftime break and came back shooting lights out and dominating the second half.



Travis Fields attempts a shot against a Winthrop defender.

At the start of the game, Winthrop gave the crowd a scare as they went up 10-0 in the first few minutes. However, Carlik Jones ended their fun as he lobbed a beautiful pass to Ed Polite Jr. for a monster alley-oop slam that sparked a 15-0 run for the Highlanders.

Following this incredible comeback, both teams traded buckets back and forth making the end of the first half an intense, heavily contested match. Radford had some help off the bench by Devin Hutchinson as he knocked down two back to back shots from beyond the arc upon checking in.

Winthrop began to pull away yet again, as they were able to tally seven threes in the first half. Still, their run was fleeting as Jones tossed another alley-oop to Polite Jr.

Jones then tied the game at 37 forcing a steal and going coast to coast for a tough lay-in. The Eagles pulled ahead just before the buzzer with an easy two-pointer.

The Second Half

Polite Jr. had no intention of slowing down or taking things down a notch as he came out of the locker room throwing down a rim-shaking two-handed dunk right out of the break. The majority of the second half, Winthrop maintained a slight lead until six minutes left in the game.

Impressive play in the paint off the bench from Devonnte Holland (14 points, five rebounds) and back to back threes from Donald Hicks and Polite Jr. put the Highlanders up 71-65. The momentum continued as they began to pull more and more away from the Eagles.

The Dedmon Center exploded as Hick was able to beat the shot clock buzzer for his fourth three of the evening putting the Highlander up by five. The band began to sing "Hey Hey Goodbye," and the final buzzer cued the singing of Radford's alma mater with fans with a final score of 87-81.

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Four Radford players scored in double digits specifically Polite, with 22 and Jones with 16. Jones also finished with eight assists, four rebounds, and four steals. Hicks and Holland combined for 26 points.

The Highlanders shot 61.3 percent from the field in the second half and were six for eleven from

beyond the arc aiding in their jump ahead of Winthrop for their second win against them this season.

The Ending of a Season

Radford played their final home game against Hampton this past Saturday. They will finish up the regular season on the road against High Point on Feb. 27 and Campbell on Mar. 2.

The first round of the Big South Championship begins on Tuesday, Mar. 5. The Highlanders will look to stay atop the Big South rankings heading into the tournament.

Photo Credit: (Brian Angus | The Tartan - **Featured Image is of #24, Ed Polite, Jr. looks to take a shot**)