



Walsh University Men's Basketball Game Notes - 3/16/10 - 7 pm EST

NAIA # 1 Walsh University (32-2) vs. # 15
University of St. Francis (IN) (27-9)
Broadcast: AM 900 WCER, www.wcer.us

Walsh University makes its sixth consecutive trip to the NAIA Division II Championships, but the first time as the number one seed. Walsh has been ranked number one in the last three polls. Walsh was the second seed at the 1996 championships in Nampa, ID.

Top-seeded Walsh (32-2) makes its second championship appearance, and first since 2005, when they face the University of St. Francis (27-9) in the D-II title game. Walsh takes a season-high 13-game winning streak into the championship game.

TITLE GAME: Walsh is 1-0 national championship games. The Cavs defeated Concordia College 81-70 to win the national championship in 2005. Walsh entered the tournament as the seventh seed and on a two-game losing streak.

BELLEVUE GAME: Jeremy Shardo's three-pointer at the buzzer lifted Walsh into tonight's NAIA Championship game, as the Cavs defeated Bellevue University 67-66.

Walsh trailed for the first time in the tournament, falling behind 10-4 and 14-6 in the early moments. The Bruins would push the lead into double digits at 21-8, and 27-12 with 7:37 to play in the half. Walsh trailed 37-24 with 1:42 to play in the half, when they mustered a 7-0 run to get back into the game, and trail 37-31 at intermission. Two Brandon Speck free throws closed the half.

Walsh closed to within 37-33 in the opening stage of the second half, but Bellevue quickly extended the lead to 42-33 and 45-35 with 16:49 to play. The Bruins would then push the lead back to 15 points, as they completed their run and led 50-35 with 14:19 to play.

Walsh trailed 55-41 with 11:19 to play when they went to work, Walsh would use a 12-0 run to climb back into the game, capped by a Ricky Jackson three-point play cutting the lead to 55-53

with 6:46 to play.

Walsh trailed 57-56 when Brandon Speck hit a three to give Walsh its first lead of the game at 59-57 with 4:58 left. Bellevue then tied the game with two Jelani Johnson free throws at 59 with 4:00 left. Walsh regained the lead (60-59) as Lamar Skeeter hit one of two free throws with 3:30 to play. Bellevue then used a six-point run to take a 65-60 lead with 1:50 to play. Jeremy Shardo hit two free throws to pull the Cavs to within three-points at 65-62 and LJ Sutton scored to pull the Cavs to within a point at 65-64 with 57 seconds to play. Sutton, however, missed a free throw for a three-point play that left the Cavs down by a point. Jelani Johnson would split two free throws with 21 seconds to play, giving Bellevue a 66-64 lead. Walsh would fail to score, as Sutton missed inside in the final seconds, then was called for foul on the rebound with 2.4 seconds to play. Bellevue's Avery Tyler then missed both free throws giving the Cavs one more chance.

Brandon Speck threw a baseball pass three-quarters down the floor to Ricky Jackson at the foul line, who made a touch pass to Shardo on the left side. Shardo then nailed the 35-footer to give Walsh the win and their second national championship appearance in six years.

Shardo led the Cavs with 18 points. He also was 8-8 from the line and turned the ball over just one time in 39 minutes. Jackson had his fourth double-double of the tournament with 12 points and 10 rebounds. Speck added 11 points off the bench and Skeeter had 10 points and five rebounds.

EMBRY RIDDLE GAME: Walsh led from start to finish for the third consecutive game, in defeating Embry Riddle Aeronautical 74-67 at the Keeter Gymnasium on Saturday.

The Cavs built a 34-26 halftime lead, on the strength of Ricky Jackson's 11 first half points. L.J. Sutton chipped in six points and five rebounds. The game featured one tie, 2-2. Walsh would build an early lead of 14-8, when the Eagles closed to 16-15 with 9:30 to play in the half. Walsh would extend the lead back to eight points on two Jeremy Shardo free throws to end the half.

Embry Riddle scored the first five points of the second half to cut the lead to 34-31. Walsh would regroup and extend the lead to nine points at 40-31 on two Sutton free throws with 17:08 to play.

The Cavs would keep the lead between five and eight points, when the Eagles soared to cut the lead to 47-43 with 12:37 to play. Walsh would answer the run with a 6-0 spurt to take their largest lead of the game at 53-43 on two Lamar Skeeter free throws with 9:50 to play.

The Eagles would then regroup and keep the Cavs within distance, trailing 57-54 on a Ray Graham three with 4:37 left. Walsh senior Brandon Speck then answered with one his biggest shots of the tournament, to put the Cavs ahead 59-54 with 4:36 to play. After the Eagles cut the lead to 59-56 on a Eric Lorenzi score, Speck nailed a three to put the Cavs ahead 62-56 with 3:45 left.

After Embry Riddle's Blake Touchard cut the lead to 62-58 with 3:27 to play, Jeremy Shardo hit a three as the shot clock expired from deep on the left to put the Cavs ahead 65-58 with 2:50 to play. Embry Riddle trimmed the lead to 65-61, when Jackson

scored on an assist from Skeeter to put the Cavs up 67-61 with 49 seconds to play. Riddle would close to 70-67 with 11 seconds to play, but Jackson settled the issue with two free throws. Walsh would connect on seven of eight free throws in the last 32 seconds to seal the win. Walsh connected on 20-23 from the line for 87% on the afternoon.

Ricky Jackson paced the Cavs with his third straight double-double of the tournament, with 25 points and 10 rebounds. Shardo added 10 points, four rebounds, five assists and two steals. Skeeter and Sutton each had 10 points and six rebounds.

Walsh out-rebounded the Eagles 43-30.

SIoux FALLS GAME: Walsh defeated the University of Sioux Falls 98-90 yesterday. The Cavs scored the games first 11 points and led from start to finish for the second straight day. Ricky Jackson and Lamar Skeeter combined to score 27 first half points, as the Cavs built a 44-36 half-time lead. USF closed the gap in the second half and tied the game at 48 with 15:54 go play. Walsh then took the lead for good with back-to-back three pointers from Jeremy Shardo and Skeeter. Walsh would extend the lead to double digits and led 80-68 with 3:39 to play. USF would whittle the lead to five points, but would get no closer. Walsh connected on 39 of 49 free throws, while nailing 7-16 from beyond the arc.

Jackson finished with 28 points, Skeeter 25 and Shardo 21. Brandon Speck added 13 points off the bench. Jackson grabbed 12 rebounds and Isaac Knight 10 boards off the bench in 19 minutes.

Walsh University Basketball Game Notes page 2

MAINE FORT-KENT GAME: Walsh opened the tournament with a 97-69 opening round win over the University of Maine at Fort-Kent (21-9) on Wednesday. Walsh led from start to finish in winning its tenth straight game. The Cavs scored the first ten points, in taking command from the opening tip. Ricky Jackson led the first half charge with 16 points and 11 rebounds. Walsh led 49-27 at the half. Walsh kept the lead in double figures the entire second half and held their largest lead at 31 points (97-66) with 1:30 to play. Jackson led all scorers with 24 points and grabbed a game-high 14 rebounds. Brandon Speck added 16 points off the bench, Lamar Skeeter tallied 14 points and eight rebounds and Jeremy Shardo and Kylece Cescato each had 12 points. Shardo complimented his 12 points with seven rebounds, five assists and three steals. Walsh shot 58% from the floor and 47% from behind the arc. The two teams combined for 22 three-pointers. Walsh outrebounded the Bengals 50-28.

LOSSES: Walsh's two losses came against team that qualified for the national tournament, Cedarville University and the University of Saint Francis (IN).

FIRST MEETING: St. Francis handed Walsh its first loss of the season, 86-75, in Indiana on December 15. The all-time series is tied 3-3

GAME STORY FROM 12/15... (Ft. Wayne, IN) NAIA No. 2 Walsh (10-1) suffered its first loss of the season, falling 86-75 to NAIA No. 20 University of Saint Francis (9-3). The Cougars broke open a tight game with a 16-7 run in the final four minutes.

Ricky Jackson scored 10 first half points and connected on 8-8 from the foul line as the Cavs held a 39-35 halftime lead. The Cougars came out smoking in the second and scored five straight points to take a 40-39 lead. USF would open up an 11-point advantage (64-53) when the Cavs rallied. Walsh would trim the lead to 70-68 with a little over four minutes to play on a dunk from L.J. Sutton, but could not get the equalizer. The Cavs had a chance to knot the game on the next possession but Sutton missed a 17-foot jumper. USF would capitalize and use free throws to stretch the game out as the Cavs went cold.

Both teams shot well from the line. The Cavs were 28-31 (90%) for the night from the stripe and 13-13 in the second half, but only 22-62 from the floor (36%). USF was 14-19 from the line in the second half, while shooting 53% (16-30) from the field in the second half when they outscored the Cavs 51-36.

Jackson led the Cavs with 20 points, as he went 14-14 from the line. He was held to 3-8 from the floor. Lamar Skeeter added 14 points and five rebounds off the bench. Jeremy Shardo chipped in 13 points and five assists and L.J. Sutton scored 10 points and grabbed nine rebounds. USF's Qadr Owens led all scorers with 29 points.

NUMBERS: Walsh is averaging 84.0 ppg in their first three tournament games. The Cavs are shooting 45% from the field, 41% from three-point and 77% from the line. Walsh is out-rebounding the opponent by 13.3 per game.

Four Cavs are in double figures, led by Ricky Jackson who is averaging 22.3 ppg. Jackson is shooting 44% from the field and 92% from the line on 24-26. Jackson is averaging 11.5 rebounds per contest. Jeremy Shardo is averaging 15.8 points and 5.5 rebounds. Lamar Skeeter is averaging 14.8 points and 6.8 rebounds. Brandon Speck is averaging 11.3 points off the bench and is 10-23 from three-point. Isaac Knight is averaging 5.8 rebounds off the bench in 17.0 mpg.

AMC: Walsh won the American Midwest Conference South Division with a 15-1 mark. Cedarville University handed the Cavs their only loss, 73-72, at Cedarville on January 26. Walsh has won outright, or shared, the AMC championship a record six straight years.

THIRD TIME FOR 30: Walsh has reached 30 wins (32) for the third time in school history and first time under Jeff Young. The Cavs won 34 games in 1982-83 under Bob Huggins and 31 games in 1995-96 under Steve Loy. Huggins' team lost in first round of the national tournament in Kansas City, while Loy's team reached the final four.

LITTLE TUNE-UP: The Cavs had a little tune-up last Saturday at Alumni Arena against the Ohio State University Buckeyes in a controlled scrimmage. OSU coach Thad Matta scheduled only one preseason exhibition with this in mind. Knowing his team had a bye the final weekend of the Big Ten season, and not wanting his players to go without outside competition before the Big Ten tournament. The schools met in an exhibition game in November in Columbus, with OSU winning 86-48. The Buckeyes have hosted the Cavs three times in exhibition games.

BACK-TO-BACK: For the third straight season, the Cavs will finish the campaign without back-to-back losses. The last season the Cavs lost two straight games was the 2006-07 season.

HOME MAGIC: Walsh finished the season 15-0 at home and have gone two straight seasons without a home loss. This season the Cavs christened the new Alumni Arena. In all, the Cavs have won 35 straight home games and 56 of their last 57. Urbana University handed Walsh its last home loss (70-64) on January 22, 2008.

JEFF YOUNG: Head Coach Jeff Young has a career mark of 168-36 at Walsh, good for a career winning percentage of .824, first in Walsh history. Young is second in career wins, behind the late Steve Loy, who won 254 games in 12 seasons (1992-2003). In his first five years, Young's teams have lost one less game each year, starting with eight losses in their national championship season of 2004-05. This year the total can only be three, two less than last year.

RICKY JACKSON: Ricky Jackson became the third straight Cavalier to win AMC Player of the Year honors. Joe Shardo won the award last year and Brandon Weems two years ago. Jackson shattered Billy Jo Williams single season scoring record of 708 points in the first half on Wednesday. Williams did in 1984-85, when he averaged 22.8 points and was named Mid-Ohio Conference Player of the Year. Jackson has totaled 785 points this season, and is the first Cavalier to average over 20 ppg since Scott Young (20.5) in 1993-94.

SECOND BEST: Walsh will finish the season with their second best winning percentage of all-time. The best came under Bob Huggins in 1982-83 at .971 when the Cavs finished 34-1.

ALL-TIME: Walsh has an all-time post-season mark of 46-27. Jeff Young is 13-4 at the national tournament.

PLAYER NOTES:

Ricky Jackson: 1st-Team All-AMC, AMC Player of the Year, four-time AMC Player of the Week, scored in double figures in all 34 games and led Walsh in scoring 26 times... set single season scoring (785) mark... scored 33 points three-times, vs. Shawnee State (2), Point Park... scored 32 points vs. Cedarville and Ohio State-Mansfield... scored 20 points in a single game 24 times... 13-15 from field vs. OSU-Mansfield... 10 or more FG in a single game 15 times... 13 double doubles... led team in rebounding 14 times and rebounded in double digits 14 times... 14 rebounds vs. Maine-Fort Kent in NAIA tourney opener... 14-14 from FT line vs. Sioux Falls in second NAIA tourney game... handed out five assists vs. Houghton

Lamar Skeeter: 2nd-team All-AMC... started the last 23 games... scored in double figures 23 times, with season and career-high 25 points vs. Sioux Falls in second NAIA tourney game... three games of 20 points or more... hit 9-13 field goals vs. Paul Smith... 12-12 from foul line at Mt. Vernon Nazarene... handed out nine assists in a single game twice, vs. Shawnee State and Point Park...

Jeremy Shardo: 1st-team All-AMC... led team in scoring three times and reached double figures 17 times... scored season-high 29 points on 10-14 from the field in regular season finale vs. Notre Dame... leads AMC in assists and second in NAIA (6.2)... handed out 10 or more assists in a single game three times, with season-high 12 vs. Algoma... recorded eight rebounds in a single game twice (Goshen, Notre Dame)... seven steals vs. Houghton

Brandon Speck: Started 11 games... scored 1000th point at Cedarville (1/26)... scored in double figures 19 times, with season-high 21 points twice (Penn State-Fayette, Wilberforce)... 7-12 from behind line vs. Wilberforce, with seven rebounds... handed out six assists vs. Notre Dame... 282 3-pt FG rank second all-time

LJ Sutton: Scored in double figures 13 times with 16 points (tying career-high) vs. OSU Mansfield... also handed out seven assists and pulled down 11 rebounds vs. OSU Mansfield... three double digit rebound games... led team in rebounding four times

Kyelce Cescato: Honorable Mention All-AMC... scored in double figures 12 times, with four double doubles... 10-13 from the field, scoring 20 points, with 15 rebounds vs. OSU Mansfield... led team in rebounding 13 times... grabbed 17 rebounds vs. Malone and had nine double digit rebound games

Kenny Kornowski: Scored 14 points, with eight rebounds in second collegiate game vs. Houghton... scored in double figures in three of first four games and six times for the season, with season-high 15 points vs. Mt. Vernon Nazarene... seven games of eight rebounds or more, with 10 twice (OSU Mansfield, Algoma)

Isaac Knight: 17 games in only semester with Cavs... scored 14 points and grabbed 12 rebounds vs. Roberts Wesleyan and 10 vs. Shawnee State... 10 rebounds in NAIA tourney game vs. Sioux Falls... shooting .661 from the field and .750 from the line

Pronunciation Guide

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|---------------------------|------------------------------|
| 33 Kenny Kornowski | CORE-now-SKI |
| 42 Nikola Knezevic | NEE-koh-lah kuh-NEH-zuh-vich |
| 52 Kyelce Cescato | Kel-SEE Sec-SCOTTO |