

Rivers Clutch FT's Gives Raiders JV Chip

Written by Robert White



Rice forward Khari Rivers sank a pair of free throws with .06 left in the 4th quarter broke a 72 all tie and give the Raiders a 74-72 win in the CHSAA "AA" JV Championship over previously undefeated Christ the King. This came after the Rice Raiders gave away a 14 point 4th quarter lead to the Royals of Christ the King who took a 1 point lead in the final minute of a thrilling contest.

The first quarter gave a hint of how this game would be played with each team coming out with high intensity and energy. A 3 pointer from guard Kevin Perez gave the Raiders a early 5-2 lead which was erased by a 7-0 run from the Royals which was sparked by the defense of guards Aaron Williams and Malcolm Covington who each scored fast break buckets off of steals. Emmanuel Andujar answered for the Raiders with steal and lay in of his own to close the scoring at 9-7 for Christ the King at the end of the quarter.

The Raiders came out strong in the 2nd period with a 12-0 led by Andujar and the defense of Justin Rodriguez run to open a 19-9 lead. But the Royals showed why they were undefeated by answering right back with a 12-0 run of their own led by Royal guards TJ Curry, who scored 6 points in the run and Williams who had 2 steals and a pair of assist in the Christ the King surge to take the lead at 21-19. The Raiders struck back late in the period with buckets from Andujar and sub Shaquille White to take a lead into the half at 28-24.

Christ the King tied the game on buckets from Covington and center Chris Ortiz in the opening minute of the 3rd period. The Raiders responded with their second 12-0 run of the game led by Rivers and Perez to open up a 40-28 lead midway through the quarter. Christ the King attempted to stem the tide with a pair of buckets from forward Terrell Hunt and a dunk from Ortiz to close the lead to 47-38 but with Hunt joining Aaron Williams on the bench with 4 fouls the Raiders where able to expand their lead to 52-38 with a pair of free throws and a 3 pointer from Andujar with five seconds left in the period.

With point guard Kevin Perez on the bench for Rice with 4 fouls Christ the King who was going for broke with a full court press was able to cut into the Raider lead. When Williams hit a 3 pointers and followed it with a steal and fast break lay up, Rice's lead was cut to 55-50 with 5 minutes left. The Raiders were able to regain control momentarily with a pair of buckets from Justin Rodriguez to go up 61-52, but on the next play Andujar fouled out and Perez was the only true ball handler on the floor for the Raiders. The Royals took advantage and continued their pressure defense which produced a pair of steals and buckets to close the gap to 62-58 with just under 4 minutes remaining.

Rice used a couple of buckets from Rivers and Mylique Owens who hit the offensive boards for put back to keep Rice in the lead, 66-60 at the 3 minute mark. The Royals kept the pressure going and when Covington scored a pair of lay ups in a 8-2 run to tie the game at 68 with 2 minutes left. The Royals lost Williams to fouls when he got tangled up with a Rice player and a double foul was called, his 5th with 1:27 left. The Royals took their first lead since the opening quarter with a 3 pointer from Curry with 1:15 left. Christ the King had a chance to expand their lead but a quick shot and a turnover from Covington led to Rodriguez's 2nd steal and lay up in the last 2 minutes of the game put the Rice up 72-71 with 45 seconds left. The Royals had a shot to take the lead but missed and the Raiders had their chance to put the game away but committed a turnover with 23 seconds left. TJ Curry was fouled with 6.4 seconds left and made the second of a pair of free throws to set up the final play with the score tied at 72. Rivers, who was great on the inside all game for the Raiders got the ball on the left wing and drove to the basket on Royal center Ortiz. When Ortiz hit Rivers on the arm as his shot went up the whistle blew with .06 seconds left on the clock and a pair of clutch free throws for him to make. He made them both for the hard fought win and a double on the day for Rice who won the freshman championship earlier in the day.

Emmanuel Andujar led the Raiders with 17 points and was followed with 15 from Khari Rivers, 13 from Kevin Perez, and 10 from Justin Rodriguez who scored 8 of them in the 4th quarter.

Christ the King was led by TJ Curry who led all scorers with 20, Aaron Williams scored 19 and Terrell Hunt scored 12.