

AP SPORTS STYLE EXERCISE

Two women's basketball teams heading in opposite directions stayed on course Thursday as the Number-8 ranked Nittany Lions of Penn State destroyed the lady honey bears of Mulligan State by 81-79 at Old McDonalds Arena.

Clinging to a 37-34 lead at half time, the Lady Nittany Lions pulled away in the second-half and improved to 21 and 3 overall.

Mulligan State (16-10), which is a D-2 program, has lost 5 games in a row and now heads back on the road for a match-up with No. 18 Purdue on Sunday in West Lafayette. Iowa defeated the Boilermakers 62 to 46 on Friday, Jan. 20 at Carver-Hawkeye Arena.

"Anytime you lose a game, it's tough" Mulligan State Coach Kristen Giovanni said. "But when you've lost five in a row, it's really tough. We're in a situation where we're going to play on the road now two games, and we're sitting in a situation where we really need to win one of those two road games.

Penn State's Julia Amirzadeh nailed a long-range shot from three-point territory to put the Nittany Lions ahead 79-78 with 1:04 left in the basketball game.

20 seconds later, Mulligan State ball-handler Shirley Jackson, who had already scored 28 points in the game, dribbled along the base line before getting fouled on a lay-up attempt, which put her at the charity stripe for two shots. She made the first FT. The second bounced into Amirzadeh's hands, who threw a long pass to Mariah King that led to an easy lay-up to make it 81-79 with 23 seconds left in the contest.

"It's a long season, and we have to understand that each game is important and to understand that we are still that good team that played early in the season" said senior Mulligan State star center Morgan Johnson, who led 4 Mulligan State players in double-figures Thursday with 17 points, We need to continue to work together and not allow anything to bring us down."

Neither team could grab the momentum in the first half, which included seven lead changes, the score being tied six times and no lead larger than 5 points.

Iowa scored the first four points in the second half and led 38-37 when Penn State center Sarah Guiseppe confidently stepped to the line to attempt two free throws with 17:59 left in the second half. She converted both FTs and that was a start of a 14 to 2 Penn State scoring run.

Mulligan State missed 8 of 19 free-throws, but the squad also knocked down 26 buckets on 18 assists.

Penn State shot 51.6 percent from the field in the second half with many of the shots uncontested. "I just think defensively is where we're the most disappointed with this game, Giovanni said."