

Carmen's Crew Takes Down Defending Champion Heartfire 74-70, Advances To Quarterfinal Round Of The Basketball Tournament



Ohio State's alumni team Carmen's Crew advanced to the quarterfinals of The Basketball Tournament Wednesday night at Dayton's UD Arena with a 74-70 upset win over defending champion and top-seeded Heartfire.

Carmen's Crew led by as many as 17 points in the first half but saw its lead slowly dissipate as the Elam Ending approached, with the defending champions eventually taking their first lead of the game, 64-63, with just 33 seconds left until the untimed extra period. But the Scarlet and Gray ultimately stood strong, scoring 11 of the game's final 17 points to reach the target score of 73 off a three-point basket by guard Jamel Morris.

The Buckeye alumni team got off to a scorching start in this round of 16 matchup, scoring 12 of the game's first 14 points to take an early 12-2 lead after a three-pointer by Andre Wesson, one of eight made threes on the night in 23 attempts for the alumni team.

Heartfire showed off its championship pedigree, cutting the deficit to 18-13 entering the second quarter and eventually 23-18 after a Bryan Griffin layup with 6:30 left in the period. But those efforts were soon squashed by a scorching sequence from Carmen's Crew, who went on a 16-4 run that included a pair of triples and an and-one from Kaleb Wesson to go up 39-22 with 2:09 left in the period.

While Heartfire would come back again to trail 39-28 at the half, the second-quarter run gave Carmen's Crew a cushion for the majority of the third quarter, allowing it to hold a comfortable lead that stayed between nine and 14 for the majority of the period. That was the most comfortable Carmen's Crew

would be for the remainder of the game, however, as the defending champions once again came back, this time closing the third quarter on an 8-0 that was capped by two-straight three-pointers, the second being a buzzer-beating heave from guard Marcus Hall from well beyond the three-point line.

Heartfire continued to chip away at the deficit as the fourth quarter began, trimming the deficit to two points on two consecutive possessions and — after Carmen's Crew went back up by six, 63-57, with 6:34 left — scoring seven straight points to take its first lead, 64-63, with 33 seconds left until the untimed Elam Ending portion of the game.

Carmen's Crew reclaimed a 65-64 lead as the final timed period expired off a Morris layup, which seemed to give the team some momentum as they made one final push to the quarterfinals. With the clock stopped and the Elam Ending score set at 73, Carmen's Crew set the tone with a three-pointer from Kaleb Wesson to go up 68-64.

After the two teams traded a pair of two-point possessions, Heartfire tied the game at 70 off a made jumper from Marcus Hall. With the game knotted up and a trip to the quarterfinals on the line, Carmen's Crew flexed its muscles one final time, getting a free throw from Andre Wesson to go up by one and then a three-pointer from Morris off a pass from Kaleb Wesson that gave the Scarlet and Gray the dramatic four-point upset victory.

Morris' clutch three gave him 10 points on the night off the bench on 3-of-4 shooting — 2-of-3 from deep — along with three rebounds and an assist. Kaleb Wesson led the way with a game-high 18 points on 5-of-9 shooting along with six rebounds and a perfect 6-of-6 shooting from the free-throw line, while Jared Sullinger rebounded from a tough performance on Monday with a dominant 12-point, 11-rebound and four-assist outing.

Carmen's Crew will continue its quest for the winner-take-all \$1 million prize on Monday, when it takes on No. 7 seed Takeover BC in the quarterfinal round at 7 p.m. in Louisville. The game will be televised live on Fox Sports 1.