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After battling its way through the South Padre Island Invitational, the Illinois State men's basketball team found itself in overtime in the championship-title game against Northwestern on Saturday in South Padre Island, Texas, thanks to a timely shot-beyond-the-arc from Tyler Brown. However, the Redbirds ultimately lost the title game in a 72-69 decision, ending the five-game winning streak the Redbirds obtained to start the season.

"When you're losing, you just know that if you're a big time player, you have to make big time shots," Brown told WJBC radio. "Whatever my team needs me to do to win the game is what I'll do, whether it's scoring points or rebounding or defensively getting stops. Tonight it was just putting points on the board and trying to keep us in the game."

Brown scored a career-high of 36 points, which is the most points scored by a Redbird in a single game since Tarise Bryson scored 41 against Central Michigan in 2000.

"[Brown] got into a thing at the end there … To make some of the shots he did to even give us a chance was pretty special. Tyler did a heck of a job," ISU head coach Dan Muller told WJBC radio.

Jackie Carmichael contributed to ISU's effort with a double-double, scoring 13 points and 12 rebounds.

Despite falling to the Wildcats, ISU held Northwestern to a 33.9 shooting percentage, while the Redbirds obtained a 42.1 shooting percentage. However, ISU's 20 turnovers and 10-of-20 free throws were outdone by Northwestern's 18 turnovers and 85.2 percent free throw shooting performance.

"Missing free throws can be contagious. If one guy starts missing free throws it can creep into

other guys, which hopefully we can put a stop to that," Muller said. "We have good free throw shooters. We shoot them every day in practice with a high percentage … I'm not worried about it."

While the 'Birds were held to a season low of 26 first-half points and a 33.3 field goal percentage, ISU still held the 26-23 lead at half after limiting Northwestern to a 24.1 shooting percentage and forcing 10 Wildcat turnovers. ISU also tallied six first-half steals and five blocked shots.

ISU came out of the locker room on a 7-0 run, but Northwestern answered with a 5-0 run of its own. The Redbirds and the Wildcats battled throughout the second half, firing shots back and forth, including a battle between Northwestern's Reggie Hearn and Carmichael.

With less than three minutes remaining in the second half, Hearn put the Wildcats ahead, 48-45, but Carmichael quickly responded with a dunk of his own to pull the Redbirds within one. Hearn answered Carmichael with a three, but Carmichael replied with a layup.

With Northwestern leading 55-52 and just 10 seconds left to play in the second half, Brown shot an opportune three-pointer to send the teams into overtime.

In the extra period, the Wildcats jumped out with an early score and ultimately hung on to win the game 72-69, despite Brown's 12-of-ISU's 14 total points scored in the overtime period.

"Northwestern's well coached, they're difficult to play against, they've got depth, they can really shoot it [and] they've got size," Muller said. "[But] if [Northwestern] is guarded much better the rest of the year by anybody else, I'll be surprised, other than the boards — the boards really hurt us. But our guys competed hard. [They] were forcing the issue offensively … taking difficult shots, coming over as we're careless, and that's not what we've been about. We wanted a little

more ball movement and a little more patience on the offensive end.

“I thought it hurt us that [Bryant Allen] got hurt because we had some tired legs on the court, and that was one guy that we could have used to sub down the stretch. He tried to come back in — he’s a warrior — but couldn’t really go for us.”

En route to the title game, ISU defeated Delaware State, 87-48, and Fairleigh Dickinson, 91-58, at Redbird Arena before traveling to South Padre Island where they defeated Alabama-Birmingham, 77-65, after Allen scored a career-high 30 points in the game.

Prior to the South Padre Island Invitational, the Redbirds traveled to Philadelphia where they took on Drexel in a battle that led to another overtime fight, where this time the ’Birds came out victorious in an 86-84 decision.

Carmichael led ISU with 21 points in the game, while Brown, Hill and Ekey all contributed double-digit figures, scoring 20, 13 and 10 points, respectively.