Written by Emily Warner, Daily Vidette Sports Editor
Sunday, 02 December 2012 17:45

If the ISU men’s basketball team’s game at No. 5 Louisville on Saturday was an episode of “Friends,” it would be called “The One Where They Almost Beat One Of The Best Teams In The Country.”

The Redbirds led for most of the game in front of a crowd of nearly 20,000 at the KFC Yum! Center, but as the final buzzer sounded and senior Tyler Brown’s three-point attempt fell short, ISU trailed 69-66, leading to its second-straight loss.

“Our guys really played hard. I’m pretty disappointed. I’m disappointed for our players,” ISU head coach Dan Muller told WJBC radio. “That’s a good team we played of course, very physical and athletic.”

Although no foul was called when Brown, who was six-for-six from the charity stripe, took his last-second shot, the call was a close one.

“I have to see it on replay. It certainly looked like it could’ve been [a foul],” Muller said following the game. “It’s tough to tell. I thought it was a pretty smart play by Tyler for the shot he could have had and what happened, but they didn’t call it and the games over.”

The attempt was Brown’s second in the final 10 seconds of the game as his first missed three was rebounded by ISU Bryant Allen and pushed back out to Brown for another shot.

Brown led all scorers in the game with 25 points. Fellow senior Jackie Carmichael had 20 points and nine boards for ISU. The Redbirds were outrebounded 33-30 and committed 22 turnovers that the Cardinals converted to 26 points.

ISU opened the game with a 14-2 run and led by as much as 13 in the first half, but as of halftime led 33-25. Louisville came out of the locker room fired up as it went on a 10-2 run to tie the game at 35 with 17:31 left on the clock.

With nine minutes left in the game, the Redbirds led 57-51 following a made free throw from Carmichael. But the Cards took the lead, 58-57, with just over six minutes to go. Allen hit a three with 1:17 remaining to keep the Redbirds within one, 67-66.

With a Louisville possession, junior Jon Ekey fouled Peyton Siva, who then sunk two free throws to make it 69-66 with 18 seconds left.

“I told Tyler, ‘Hey we have enough time. If you can get to the rim, get to the rim. If you have an attempt at a three, go ahead and do it’” Muller said. “Against their defense, you try to run something fancy, it might not work. You just try to get the ball to your best player and give him a chance to make something happen.”

Although the Redbirds were not able to walk away with the win, there are some takeaways from playing one of the nation’s best teams.

“We want to play really good teams and as I told my team in the locker room, they’re not going to be afraid of environments,” Muller said. “[Playing at Louisville was] an opportunity and our guys certainly tried to take advantage of it but came up a little bit short and of course, Coach [Rick] Pitino and his team are excellent and they’re going to win a … bunch of games this year.”

ISU (5-2) will return to Redbird Arena to host Wyoming at 7:05 p.m. on Tuesday.