

## LONG-DISTANCE LOSS FOR RAMS

By **NICK PARISH**

### **Charlotte 81 Fordham 75**

Early in the season, Detroit Renaissance High coach Mark White circled this game on his schedule to make the weekend trip and watch two of his 10 former players now on college teams. There's little chance White would have predicted either of his former players would shine in the national spotlight.

Yesterday, however, senior guard Marcus Bennett came off the bench to score a career-high 29 points, wowing both his former coach and his one-time protégé, Fordham's Marcus Stout, while leading Charlotte to an 81-75 win over the Rams 81-75.

Bennett, 7 of 10 from 3-point range, was the victor in the duel with Stout, although the Rams' guard drew first blood, knocking down his first three attempts from outside and jazzing up the crowd while Bennett patiently made 4 of 6 from beyond the arc in the first half.

Bennett drove his 49ers to a 54-50 lead midway through the second half with three consecutive 3-pointers, galling the already lively sell-out crowd at Rose Hill Gymnasium. He finished with 21 points on 7-for-10 shooting from beyond the arc.

With less than five minutes to play in the neck-and-neck second, Bennett pushed Charlotte ahead 63-61 with a nifty backdoor layup and then stole the ball from Stout in transition.

The 49ers didn't look back down the stretch, and White (who earlier admitted he was rooting for both players) congratulated Bennett.

"[White] just gave me a big kiss, man, I was happy to see him," Bennett said. "It gave me a lot of confidence today just to see him; I haven't seen him in a while. He was proud of me."

As teammates at Renaissance, Bennett was the senior to Stout's freshman. Stout looked to eclipse his elder in Fordham's first ESPN-televised home game, but flagged in the second half, finishing with 16 points and three rebounds.

"[Bennett] took responsibility for helping contribute to [Stout's] development, grooming him, showing him some things from his experiences," White said. "They play the same position, so he was like an understudy to him. Stout really looked up to Bennett when he was there, because Bennett was our main guy . . . our go-to guy."

Fordham was led yesterday by sophomore forward Bryant Dunston, who scored 23 with 10 rebounds, and senior guard Jermaine Anderson, who had 21 points. The Rams, however, were unable to staunch the second-half surge from Charlotte (16-9, 9-3 Atlantic 10).

Fordham (12-13, 7-5) held the lead throughout the physical first half, with Dunston pushing on Chris Nance. He limited Charlotte's big center to four points while turning in 16 himself — two baskets from beyond the arc and the rest on slippery post moves.

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