



POSTGAME NOTES

USC vs. Utah

Galen Center • Los Angeles, Calif.

Thursday, January 30, 2020

Final: USC 56, Utah 52

- With the 56-52 win tonight, USC improved to 17-4 (6-2) and Utah fell to 12-8 (3-5).
- USC has now surpassed last season's win total of 16 (16-17).
- Utah had won four of its previous five games at the Galen Center.
- USC trailed 14-4 eight minutes into the first half. USC made 2 of its first 12 shots (16.7 percent), while Utah made 5 of its first 10 shots (50 percent). USC cut it to 21-18, but Utah hit back-to-back three-pointers to open up a 27-18 lead with 2:45 remaining in the half. Utah led 29-23 at halftime. Utah made 38.5 percent of its first-half shots, while USC made 34.8 percent. Utah made 5 of 10 three-pointers before the break (50 percent) and USC was 1-for-8 (12.5 percent). Utah outrebounded USC 17-14 in the first half.
- USC took its first lead at 41-40 on a driving layup by Elijah Weaver with 7:13 remaining in the game and Utah called timeout.
- Nick Rakocevic finished with 16 points and 15 rebounds for his seventh double-double of the season and 27th of his career. He had the game-winning tip-in tonight and scored 12 of USC's 23 first-half points. He also had a game-winning tip-in at TCU. Rakocevic's tip-in was 2 of the 4 second-chance points USC had tonight.
- Onyeka Okongwu hit a pair of free throws to clinch the game and finished with 11 points and 11 rebounds for his eighth double-double of the season.
- Elijah Weaver scored a season-high 14 points, 10 in the second half. He made 5 of his 8 shots.
- Jonah Mathews finished with 13 points by going 8-for-8 from the free throw line. He has now made 26 of his last 29 attempts from the free throw line (90 percent).
- As a team, USC has made 77.0 percent (70-for-91) of its free throws the last four games, after shooting 65.6 from the line in the first 17 games.
- USC outscored Utah 33-23 in the second half and has outscored the opposition 236-167 in the last six games. USC has won the second half in 17 of 21 games this season.
- USC made 37.3 percent of its shots tonight after making 64.6 percent of its shots at Oregon State on Jan. 25 (its best shooting percentage in a game since 2007).
- USC held Utah to a 32.7 shooting percentage tonight and over the last 10 games has held the opposition to a 38.0 shooting percentage (235-for-619). It was the 13th game this season that USC held its opponent to under 40 percent shooting.
- USC had 9 blocks tonight to give it 118 for the season. USC came into the game tonight 17th in the country in blocked shots. Okongwu had 4 blocks to give him 63 on the season, sixth behind Taj Gibson who has the USC freshman record (69) and eighth on USC's all-time single-season block list. He also entered the game leading all freshmen in the country in blocked shots.
- USC was outrebounded 36-34 tonight, just the fourth time this season being outrebounded in a game.
- USC's next game will vs. Colorado on Feb. 1 at 7:30 p.m. The game will air on FS1.

ANDY ENFIELD QUOTES:

"That was a good win. We started slow. But we held them to 32% shooting. When you can't shoot, you better defense. I'm proud how our team stayed in the game and defended for 40 minutes. And we made some free throws tonight. Nick had a great game, Onyeka was a little off but he hit a big shot down the stretch and made a big block. Elijah was terrific off the bench. He's been spectacular offensively 3 of the last 4 games.

"We've had a lot of close games, all were good teams, and we're 4-1 in those games. That's a credit to our players and the way they play defense.

"Our defense won the game for us tonight. We held them to 32% shooting and we went 14-for-16 from the foul line.

"Their big guys played very well, they scored in the paint. Allen got some scores.



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"It's been a very difficult few days, not only in LA but around the country. I coached against Kobe in the league when he was young. I was impressed with his dedication, work ethic and desire to be great. It was very impressive to watch him develop, be a leader and will his team to win. To lose someone like that is very difficult. It's been a hard week. But it was nice to win a game where we honored him."

NICK RAKOCEVIC QUOTES:

"I saw Onyeka go to the basket with his left hand, but it looked off, he was leaning to the left. I got a lucky bounce and go an easy tip-in. I was in the right place at the right time. I put myself in position to get the win. The play was for Big O, he just missed it. So I was under the basket. I make sure when the game is on the line, I'm around the basket.

"We stay together. We've been there before. A lead doesn't faze us. We have no selfish people on this team. We all want to win, we're on the same page. When guys are like that, it's easy to come back from a deficit.

"My role is to do whatever I can to help my teammates and help us win. Early in the game when we started flat, I knew I had to get us going. I made sure the team got the win, that's what I did today.

"We're not fazed by a 9-point lead. We're used to coming back. Our motto is toughness. I'm proud of how we stuck together and had each other's back.

"I always respected Kobe's game. The biggest thing was everything he did off the court. When he came here to a game, he took time to talk to everyone and be interested. His character says more about him than anything. It's sad to see what his family is going through. Tonight was for him. I'm glad we won for him."

ELIJAH WEAVER QUOTES:

"As the game went on, we got into it. My layup was crucial, it got us our first lead and boosted our confidence.

"I bring energy and confidence.

"Today was a special day, playing for Kobe we weren't losing today. Whenever I shoot anything, a balled up paper, I yell out Kobe."

UTAH HEAD COACH LARRY KRYSTKOWIAK QUOTES:

"It's a tough one to swallow for sure. We didn't make enough shots, but super proud of our guys defensively on the rebound front. I think the guys are playing the game the right way but we just had to, we have to be a little bit better."

"I thought our guys had a really good week of practice. I've always said you play like you train and we had three terrific practices. I thought we put together a good defensive game plan, Regardless, the game plan was right in terms of those guys executing but when you're playing a game in the 50's we just have to knock down a few more shots. I'm proud of the guys, we just have to make a couple more baskets or a couple more free throws and we're talking about a different story."