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22/05/2007

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### KSA - ARCC-EEI continue their winning ways

DAMMAM (EPBL) - The euphoria of their victorious campaign last

season may have settled down but their passion remains burning as ARCC -EEI continues their winning ways in the 2007 Commissioner's Cup hosted by the prestigious Eastern Province Basketball League at the Al-Ettifaq club in this city.

ARCC-EEI picked up where they left off as they tested the mettle of Al-Suwaidi and win their second game of the elimination round after soundly beating the Jubail-based squad, 88-70, sending the early title favorites to the bottom of the standings.

Romy Lazaro, ARCC-EEI personnel manager, said he's so proud of what his team has accomplished and expressed confidence that, following the two consecutive wins, ARCC -EEI will continue to be a force to reckon with in this league.

Reyes led ARCC-EEI, scoring a team-high 31 points including two triples.

Al-Suwaidi started slow with the exception of Noel Intal who worked tirelessly to counter the aggressive ARCC-EEI attack. Despite their poor shooting, Al-Suwaidi unleashed a late run to close at 39-27 at half time.

The game turned physical throughout the second half as both teams tightened their defenses. But ARCC-EEI managed to hang on to their lead by dominating both ends of the floor ending the third period with a 69-48 lead even as Al-Suwaidi tried a number of strategies in an attempt to stop the Juaymah dribblers from running away.

Aside from Reyes, Quiambao had 13 points, while Oropesa, Caling and Labayo chipped in 10 points apiece. Dela Pena, Dela Vega, Cabonillas and Aguirre combined for 14 points.

Intal made a massive input for Al-Suwaidi by scoring 33 points including four triples. Edgar Allet contributed 12 points and Rey Pasamba added a measly 6 points.

In the Open Non-Rated division, Mar Pecho, Assistant Commissioner, described it as one of the finest games he had ever seen -- after a record 16 deadlocks and 21 lead changes in the game between Mazda and Saudi Techint.

The last laugh came in favor of Mazda as they remained undefeated

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and delivered an 85-81 cliffhanger Friday in a battle of league leaders in the Open Non-Rated Division. The win propelled the car manufacturers to the top of the standings with a conference best 4-0 win-loss slate while dealing the Techint their first setback in three outings.

Witnessed by a sell-out crowd, Marvin Vibar put himself in the spotlight as the soft-spoken forward helped Mazda at a crunchtime in overcoming a 57-63 third quarter deficit to level at 79-all, the 16th deadlock of the match, with 1:25 left.

Saudi Techint guard Brian Castor made a decisive drive inside the paint but his shot was blocked by Ferdie Batang but Ryan Briones got the loose ball and put up a hurried shot that was too strong. Marvin Maniago grabbed the defensive rebound for Mazda with 1:02 seconds remaining.

In the ensuing play, Aldwin Bauyon found the open Vibar at the wing for a basket plus the fifth foul on slotman Charlie Alvira. Vibar calmly completed his three-point play and Mazda went ahead, 82-79, with 45 seconds left.

Russel Briones found himself open beyond the arc, but his shot hit the back rim. Welster Bartolato grabbed the offensive rebound but missed the follow-up. Joey Landicho sealed Mazda's win by hauling down the defensive board with 27 seconds remaining.

Mazda was out-rebounded by Techint 28-36 but was more successful on points off fastbreak plays, 24-12, courtesy of Aldwin Bauyon. The running game of Techint took a hit in the absence of injured guard Jeffrey Mendoza.

Vibar had 13 points, six of which coming from the final 2 minutes.

Bauyon led all scorers with 34 points and 7 assists in another sterling performance. Batang added 14 points with two blocks and Maniago chipped in 12 points to go along with eight rebounds.

Ryan and Russel Briones had 21 and 23 points respectively for the Techint's first defeat.

In the curtain raiser, SINTEC/SOGEC enjoyed a big win against Jarir Bookstore with a 78-69 come-from-behind-victory for a 3-1 win-loss slate in the Inter-Company Bonafide Division.

Heading them towards a direction that they never expected are guards Edgar Evero and Roy Lirio, who combined for 53 points and 11 assists.

The one-stop-bookshop Jarir, enjoyed a 24-13 advantage after the first quarter but had a costly eight turnovers in the second period that SOGEC capitalized on to uncork their own 11-0 run to gain the lead at 25-24 and held on from there.

During that second quarter span, Rolly Hadloc and guard Ryan Martillano were on the bench and the duo of Evero and Lirio anchored SINTEC/SOGEC's big run.

Jarir's big man, Del Rosario, closed the gap to 74-69 with 1:25 seconds remaining but the surge came a bit late as SINTEC put on the finishing touches.

Forward Benjie Canon added 12 points and Manny Diegas had eight for SINTEC while Del Rosario and Martillano had 17 points apiece for Jarir. Hadloc had 15 points and Marvin Abaco 9 points for Jarir.

Meanwhile, PANDA demolished Al Falak 101-59; Al Tuwairqi rolled past Al Majdouie 82-58 and Saudi Paper surprised Al Hoty 91-84.

**By Romeo O. Navidad**

FIBA Correspondent in Saudi Arabia

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