Cambridge vs. Loughborough (54-28)  
13 Nov 2019

Despite having home-court advantage, the Cambridge Blues experienced a rough start in their game against Loughborough. Loughborough has earned its reputation in the UK as a sports-university, and their team warmed up confidently and their players’ skill showed promise of it being a tough match. Both teams struggled to get on the scoreboard in the first two minutes—Cambridge had several good looks at the basket, but nothing seemed to fall for them, and aggressive rebounds by Loughborough’s Centre Barlow made second chances for the Blues difficult to come by. Two minutes in, Loughborough entered the scoreboard with a short jump shot by Collits. Two consecutive free throws by Lorente brought Loughborough up 4-0. The Blues, down by 4, had to regain their calm and take back control of their court. They slowed the game down to allow their plays to do their work, and soon settled back into their rhythm and eventually entered a scoring streak: baskets by Wright, Illingworth, Florez, and Pohran brought the score up to 10-4. Meanwhile, solid defense by the entire squad kept Loughborough from scoring any easy baskets. One additional basket by Loughborough’s Centre was quickly countered with a Blues basket by Monti, and the quarter ended with Cambridge up 12-6.

In the second quarter, the Blues executed a lot of 2-man game situations where several player-pairs—Florez & Camacho, Pohran & Illingworth, and others—used screen-and-rolls, drive-and-dish, and give-and-gos. These 2-man scenarios set off a chain reaction on the offensive court, and earned the Blues team a number of easy lay ups. Meanwhile, aggressive, quick, no-nonsense defense by the Blues shut down Loughborough’s opportunity to score: Galimberti consistently fronted the Loughborough’s Centre Forward, effectively shutting her out of the game. The team’s rock-solid defense enabled the Blues to enter another scoring streak of 13 points while Loughborough failed to add any points to their total until the quarter was almost up. Finally, seven minutes in, Lorente sunk a three pointer for Loughborough, and the Blues’ magic was broken. Topped up with an additional two baskets by Illingworth, the first half finished at 29-13 for the Blues.

In the second half, the Blues drove hard to the basket, taking the lane whenever they had it, or drawing fouls and getting sent to the line for easy free throws. The Blues struggled to execute their offensive rhythm in the third quarter, and Loughborough looked as if they might close the score gap. However, Cambridge refused to let down on defense, and speedy guards like Monti and Florez frequently stole the ball and proceeded to push down to the offensive court for a fast break lay-up. However, conscious of getting into foul trouble and sending Loughborough to the line, Coach Wright called on the team to slow things down in the fourth quarter; Cambridge let themselves run their plays and burn out the clock so to prevent Loughborough from having additional possessions. Slowing things down allowed Cambridge to use their posts in the block, and Dawson scored two consecutive baskets with her post moves. The game finished with a well-timed buzzer-shot by Wong, giving Cambridge a second win of the season at 54-28.

Including the game they won by forfeiture, the CUWBbC Blues are now 3-0 for this season!