



ARIZONA DAILY STAR | SUNDAY, JANUARY 5, 2020 | PAGE AB1

Editor: Ryan Finley | 520-573-4312 | sportsed@tucson.com

#### NO. 25 ARIZONA 75, ARIZONA STATE 47





KELLY PRESNELL / ARIZONA DAILY STAR Arizona guard Josh Green dunks to end a fast break in the Wildcats' 75-47 win over visiting Arizona State on Saturday night at McKale Center. UA hadn't played a game in 14 days.

## Rested UA runs ASU off court in 28-point win

#### By Bruce Pascoe

ARIZONA DAILY STAR Stop taking silly shots. Feed

Zeke. Don't foul so much. Rebound.

Play for Arizona, not yourself.

On and on and on came Sean Miller's messages, to the media and to his team over a long twoweek break that started after the Wildcats lost three of four games to finish nonconference play.

But in a 75-47 win over ASU at McKale Center on Saturday in their Pac-12 opener, at least for one night, the Wildcats turned mostly into that team.

While they hit just 4 of 15 3-pointers, the Wildcats avoided taking many of the ill-advised shots Miller had been upset about, hitting 47.6% overall while scoring efficiently on the break and through Zeke Nnaji inside.

Arizona scored 25 fast-break points and gave Nnaji the ball so he could take more shots than any other UA player, and the efficient

#### **UP NEXT**

- Who: No. 25 Arizona (11-3, 1-0) at No. 4 Oregon (12-3, 1-1)
- When: 7 p.m. Thursday
- TV: ESPN or ESPN2
- Radio: 1290-AM, 107.5-FM

freshman big man responded with 17 points on 7-for-11 shooting and 11 rebounds.

Miller's messages were sent, and received.

"Yeah. Definitely," guard Josh Green said. "When you have someone like Zeke as the four man, not many people are his size, height or strength, so it's a big factor for us guards in getting him inside. It creates for our a whole offense - obviously he's gonna bully his player down and if they double, it brings it out for the perimeter players."

Green responded by collecting 12 points and seven rebounds while taking only one 3-pointer

 – a miss – after Miller said before the game that he could make the case that anyone shooting 32 percent should never take such a shot (Green was hitting 32.5% from 3).

Instead, Green picked up his points where he gets them the best, on the break. He scored eight of his 12 points after halftime while UA took advantage of many fast-break opportunities: He went uncontested coast-to-coast after he rebounded a missed Sun Devil free throw, and later made a fastbreak layup after Nico Mannion stole the ball and threw it to him.

After that play, Nnaji then created his own assist, stealing the ball from Remy Martin, the guy who led the Sun Devils to a season sweep of the Wildcats last year, then dunking it in to give UA a 63-37 lead with 7:24 left.

That was pretty much how it went all night. The Wildcats were motivated and efficient, getting forward Stone Gettings back from head injuries for the first time in

#### PAC-12 STANDINGS

Team	Conf.	Overall		
Colorado	1-0	12-2		
Stanford	1-0	12-2		
USC	1-0	12-2		
Arizona	1-0	11-3		
Oregon	1-1	12-3		
Utah	1-1	10-4		
Washington State	1-1	10-5		
UCLA	1-1	8-7		
Oregon State	0-1	10-3		
Washington	0-1	10-4		
Arizona State	0-1	9-5		
California	0-1	6-8		

Saturday's games: Arizona 75, ASU 47; Washington State 79, UCLA 71, OT: Oregon 69, Utah 64 Sunday's games: Oregon State at

Colorado, 4 p.m. (ESPNU); USC at Washington, 8 p.m. (FS1)

over a month, and increased production from freshman center Christian Koloko.

Overall, UA had four players

in double figures with Mannion and Dylan Smith adding 10 points each, while 10 total players scored.

They were fast, but not too fast for Miller's liking.

"We want to play at a fast tempo ... it makes sense with Nico and the team that we have," Miller said. "But one of the things that we've gone through is you can play at a fast pace, and sometimes shoot yourself in the foot. Taking challenged 3s, and ignoring somebody that's very efficient around the post (in) Zeke.

"I think that it's up to us to make good decisions. You have to take the good early opportunity but when we didn't take that tonight, we ran better offense, and we were more balanced. And we have a team of guys on offense that can do a lot of things."

While the Wildcats fouled more than Miller would like – Green even picked up a second-half

#### See BASKETBALL, AB2

Cats play with energy and toughness after break, wreck Sun Devils

or two weeks - Arizona's longest in-season break without a basketball game since 1944-45 - the Wildcats sat and stewed, troubled by an unexpected December decline, its only victory in 34 days coming against Nebraska-Omaha.

What was this, 1983?

Even Ben Lindsey's ill-fated, 4-24 UA team of 1982-83 had a better December, winning three times before losing at home to Illinois Wesleyan and effectively igniting a search that led to Lute Olson.

This time the UA's December descent didn't trigger a search as much as it led to a resolve that it couldn't play much worse than it did in losses to Baylor, Gonzaga and St. John's.

It led to a collective commitment that if nothing else it could play harder and smarter, start to finish, than it did in December.

Into this trap walked Arizona State, itself reeling from a 40-point loss to St. Mary's, a bit shy on size and worried about



**Greg Hansen** 

its ability to shoot straight - the Sun Devils entered Saturday's game ranked No. 279 nationally in 3-point shooting and 203rd in foul shooting.

And just like that the Sun Devils missed their first six foul shots - who ever does that? – went 1 for 9 from 3-point distance and trailed 36-17 at halftime.

So frustrated was ASU coach Bobby Hurley that he snapped his hands together to call a timeout with 51 seconds left in the half, exasperated. It wasn't that Arizona played so well, it's that the UA's energy and toughness two elements often missing in December – kicked in.

Arizona won 75-47. The only team in America to have a worse



KELLY PRESNELL / ARIZONA DAILY STAR Arizona center Chase Jeter tries to force his way along the baseline against Arizona State forward Romello White in the first half.

coming off the bench. We didn't

No inside game. No outside

After scoring 58 points against

Arizona in a rare two-game sweep

last year, Sun Devils guard Remy

really have in inside presence."

game. No chance.

#### night than ASU were the New England Patriots.

"When we go 3 for 21 from the 3-point line, this is what we're looking at," said Hurley, who was impressed by Arizona's size. "They had an army of big guys

Martin had just five points when the Wildcats expanded their lead to 30 points on Saturday. Ordinarily, Martin is one of the Pac-12's leading players, a ball of basketball fire.

But on Saturday all the fire came from Sean Miller's team. And have you ever seen a more awe-inspiring alley-oop dunk than the one from UA freshman Christian Koloko as Arizona built its lead to 30 points?

It was that kind of a redemptive night at McKale.

Miller used the unusually long break as a trouble-shooter. He made clear what he expected from each of his seven first-year players - "clarifying roles," he said and one of those corrections was getting freshman Zeke Nnaji more involved in the offense.

Even Miller admitted he "probably could've done a better job" running more of his club's offense through Nnaji in the first 13 games, but better late than

# **ARIZONA WILDCATS**



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#### **SEEN AND HEARD AT MCKALE CENTER**

#### **Dalen Terry in town**

Future Wildcat Dalen Terry was in attendance for Arizona-ASU and sat behind the UA's bench. The 6-foot-7-inch Terry is a four-star wing from Tempe and a senior at Phoenix Hillcrest Prep. Terry was Arizona's first commit and signee of the 2020 recruiting class. Sean Miller normally has high-priority recruits in attendance for games when McKale Center is rocking. Last year, Nico Mannion and Josh Green were in the same seats as Terry's.

#### A one-on-one with Walton

The UA honors an active duty solider or a veteran every game, an introduction that invariably leads to a standing ovation from the McKale Center faithful. Even by those standards, Saturday's introduction of Gwen Niemi was special.

The 99-year-old Officer Candidate School graduate pushed a walker to midcourt and, as the cheers rose, appeared to become emotional. Then she did a little dance, walked from midcourt to press row and found ESPN analyst Bill Walton. She leaned in whispered something in his ear, and got a broad smile.

Niemi graduated from college at the age of 21 when she heard that the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps was starting, according to Star archives.

In 1942, Niemi applied for Officer Candidate School and was one of the first 200 women to make it through.

She served in many cities, achieving the rank of captain, before requesting a discharge in 1946.

"After the war was over, they had less and less need for women," she told the Star in 2018.

After leaving the military, she moved to Tucson, where she taught physical education at the University of Arizona for four years before starting a family.

So what did she say to Walton? As they say in the military, it's classified.

#### No mask for Stone

When Arizona forward Stone Gettings checked into the game on Saturday, fans at McKale Center made him feel welcome

After all, it was the first time Gettings played for the Wildcats since suffering a facial fracture injury against Penn in the Wooden Legacy Tournament on Nov. 29.

Gettings is now up to five weeks in his rehabilitation and it was a possibility he had to wear a protective mask, famously worn by former Detroit Pistons star Richard Hamilton.

Getting finished with five points and five rebounds in UA's 75-47 rout Saturday.

#### Mannion vs. House, again

Arizona's Nico Mannion and ASU freshmen Jaelen House are quite familiar with one another. The two Phoenix natives squared off three times in high school, Mannion with Pinnacle and House with Shadow Mountain.

In a game for the ages, defending Class 6A champion Pinnacle and defending 4A champion Shadow Mountain went down to the wire in their last game in November 2018

House hit two free throws with 11 seconds left to give Shadow Mountain the lead. Mannion got the inbounds pass and snuck past House to get to the top of the key. He hoisted a shot from the top of the key and rattled



KELLY PRESNELL / ARIZONA DAILY STAR

Arizona's Josh Green, left, and Chase Jeter get tangled up with Arizona State's Kimani Lawrence, center, as they try to control a rebound in the second half. UA visits No. 4 Oregon on Thursday night in a game that could go a long way in deciding the Pac-12 race.

## BASKETBALL

Continued from Page AB1

technical along with ASU's Jaelen House after the two held an apparently inappropriate conversation at the end of a play – the Wildcats outrebounded ASU 49-35 and also helped hold the Sun Devils to just 30.5% shooting.

Then again, ASU just wasn't shooting well at all. It was 8 for 19 from the uncontested land known as the free-throw line and just 3 for 21 from 3.

As such, the Sun Devils never really challenged to win a third straight game against the Wildcats after sweeping them last season for the first time in a decade.

The win moved UA to 11-3 overall and 1-0 in the Pac-12, in which the Wildcats will next face predicted conference winner Oregon on Thursday in Eugene.

recording four assists on their first seven baskets, shooting 7 for 12 to that point.

After regaining his starting role following a second-half benching in UA's Dec. 21 loss to St. John's, guard Dylan Smith started the new trend of efficiency. With the ball inside the arc but no easy shot open, he dished to Nnaji as he raced along the baseline, and Nnaji put it in.

The Wildcats continued careful play throughout the middle of the first half and, with just under four minutes left to play, were shooting 12 for 23 from the field with only five turnovers while outrebounding ASU 18-11.

Arizona received a scare late in the first half when Mannion bruised his knee in a collision with ASU's Rob Edwards, missing the last four minutes before halftime, but he returned to play 14 minutes in the second half and Miller said

NO. 25 ARIZONA 75, ARIZONA STATE 47 
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 Kill Min M-A M-A O'T A PF PTS

 Martin
 34
 7-19
 3-6
 0.3
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 2 20

 Lawrence
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 2-3
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 Verge
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 White
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 3
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 Cherry
 17
 1-1
 0-0
 0-3
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 2

 Edwards
 15
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 Christopher
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 0-0
 0-3
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 4
 7

 Fotals

		FG	FT	Reb					
Arizona	Min	M-A	M-A	0-T	Α	PF	PTS		
Green	34	5-10	2-3	2-7	2	4	12		
Nnaji	27	7-11	3-4	2-11	0	2	17		
Mannion	26	3-9	3-3	0-2	7	2	10		
Baker	24	1-4	1-2	0-2	4	2	3		
Smith	23	4-6	0-0	0-2	1	4	10		
Jeter	18	2-5	2-4	3-9	Ō	3	6		
Gettings	17	2-5	0-0	0-5	1	0	5		
Hazzard	13	1-4	0-0	0-3	Ō	1	2		
Koloko	11	4-7	0-2	3-6	1	0	8		
Lee	7	1-2	0-4	0-0	1	0	2		
Totals	200 3	30-63	11-22	10-47	17	18	75		
Percentages: FG .476, FT .500, 3-Point Goals:									
4-15, .267	(Smith	12-4.0	Gettin	gs 1-2.	Mar	nnio	n 1-3		
Baker 0-1, Nnaji 0-1, Green 0-2, Hazzard 0-2).									
Team Rebounds: 3. Blocked Shots: 6 (Green									
3, Koloko 2, Jeter). Turnovers: 12 (Mannion 4,									
Groop 2 Smith 2 Baker Cettings (Inter Maaii)									

**Steals:** 6 (Baker 2, Green 2 **Fouls:** 6 (Baker 2, Green 2 **Fouls:** Green, 13:22 second er 2, Green 2, Nnaji 2). **Technica** Arizona State Arizona

Gettings received a warm round of applause and then pulled down a rebound and hit a turnaround jumper on UA's next possession.

"It was awesome," Miller said of Gettings' return. "Stone means a lot to our team because he's a different style of player. He's a big guy that skilled. ... I thought during the game it meant a lot having him back because he does a lot of good things for our team."

Miller turned more often to freshman center Koloko over Ira Lee off the bench in the second half. Koloko had six points and five rebounds through in his first seven minutes played, including dunks in each half.

Miller said he plans to play Koloko in every game and see how it goes from there. With Koloko and all his 10 contributing players, Miller said he has done probably a better job over the Christmas break in

home the game-winner with a second to go. Maybe the two will have another moment like that later this season.

#### **Faces in the crowd**

McKale Center brought out recognizable former UA athletes. Sitting eight rows behind ASU's bench was former UA standout and All-Pac-12 women's golfer Haley Moore. She helped the Wildcats take down Alabama to win a national championship in 2018 and - more recently - led Arizona to a third-place finish in the NCAA championships last year.

Moore will make her LPGA debut from Jan. 23-26 in the Gainbridge Championship in Florida.

Ex-McDonald's All-American and UA star Jerryd Bayless and former shooting guard Brendon Lavender were shown on the McKale Center video board and received a loud ovation from UA fans. Bayless played for the Wildcats in the 2007-08 season and was named to the All-Pac-10 Second Team before a 10-year NBA career, which placed him in the McKale Center ring of honor

Lavender averaged 3.4 points in 12.1 minutes per game off Arizona's bench from 2008-12. Of course, Cleveland Indians manager Terry "Tito" Francona was also in his courtside seats.

#### **D-Will active on Twitter**

Former Wildcat standout Derrick Williams is currently playing professional ball overseas for Fenerbahce Beko in Instanbul, which is in the Turkish Basketball League and EuroLeague. This season, Williams is averaging 11.6 points, 4.5 rebounds and 1.4 steals in 27.2 minutes per game.

After a championship season with Bayern Munich in Germany, Williams had a chance to return to the U.S., but declined according to him.

"Just to let people know, I turned down NBA offers to come to Fenerbahce Beko. I love it so far. There will be better days in 2020," Williams tweeted.

Williams was a former No. 2 overall pick by the Minnesota Timberwolves and he revealed on Twitter his confusion when he was drafted due to the number of power forwards already on roster.

"I remember it like it was yesterday when Minnesota picked me and I'm thinking 'So they have (Kevin) Love, Anthony Randolph, Mike Beasley and me at the four. Didn't add up to me," he tweeted.

#### He said it

"At Arizona, you gotta dunk it. That's why you come here, right? So you can dunk that."

- Miller on ASU's five chasedown blocks in the first half, which prevented easy fastbreak baskets for Arizona

#### The big number

### 10-1

Arizona's record in Pac-12 home openers under Sean Miller after Saturday's win. The last time Arizona hosted ASU to begin conference play was in the 2017-18 season when the No. 17 Wildcats knocked off undefeated No. 3 Sun Devils 84-78.

- Justin Spears and Alec White

ASU dropped to 9-5. While there were dips in UA's effort, the Wildcats' lead never dipped below double-digits after the first 15 minutes of the game.

Arizona took a 16-9 lead cheekbone against Penn on over the first eight minutes, Nov. 29. Gettings rejoined the utes into Saturdays' game,

he was fine.

slightly, the Wildcats received forward Gettings back for the first time since he suffered a concussion and fractured

While Mannion was limited Wildcats for practices after Christmas break while wearing a mask but was cleared to play without a mask for Saturday's game.

Upon entering eight min-

clarifying roles.

"It's something I wished I might have been able to do a little bit earlier," Miller said. "But the guys know what to do, what's expected, and I think they're trying to become a better team."

## HANSEN

Continued from Page AB1

#### never, right?

Hurley described Nnaji's 17-point, 11-rebound night as "ridiculous," a term meant as a compliment. The Sun Devils don't have an inside source like Nnaji, and that's going to be trouble for ASU in the final 17 Pac-12 games.

A lot of college basketball teams don't easily make in-season adjustments; the most difficult variable in the basketball is getting high school superstars to share the ball and play as one. On Saturday, the Wildcats aced that test for one of the few times since opening the season.

Miller said he was worried about his team being receptive of a new way of basketball, but he could probably see it coming together in the extended practice time since losing to St. John's.

"It was a good lesson for our team - that we have to play the right way," he said. "Winning is incredibly hard. To our team's credit, we've taken these 14 days between games and worked hard, gotten better. We've had a great attitude?"

Freshman Josh Green seemed to find a new motor against the Sun Devils. He was in the go-go-go mode, not as a wreckless freshman but as a triggerman to the UA's up-tempo pace. Green only attempted nine shots and scored 12 points, but he had two steals, blocked three shots and was a problem for the Sun Devils, start to finish.

In the first 13 games, Green was, as many freshmen, a bit inconsistent. The extended post-Christmas practice ses-



KELLY PRESNELL / ARIZONA DAILY STAR

Arizona forward Ira Lee shoulders his way by Arizona State forward Taeshon Cherry in the second half. Lee had two points in seven minutes in the Wildcats' blowout victory.

sions seem to have made him more sure of himself. He was as good as anybody on the floor Saturday, except maybe Nnaji.

Arizona's unusually long holiday break was a result of two things: One, Miller does not want to play non-conference games over the holidays, preferring to spend that time on prep work for the Pac-12

And, two, the league schedule gave Arizona a rivalry game in Week 1, which meant only one game and extra time to prepare.

"It's a long break, but I do think we took advantage of it," he said.

Maybe in another season the schedule doesn't work out that well. Maybe you open the season taking seven new

players on the Oregon Trail, playing the Ducks and Beavers without being fully prepared.

But this time it all worked out for Arizona.

The Sun Devils were vulnerable and the Wildcats were aching to make up for lost ground, lost pride and lost time.

On Saturday, they found themselves.