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Sports: Big South Championships, Women's Basketball 2016

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On Friday, March 11, 2016, at the Kimmel Arena, in Asheville, NC, Women's Basketball for the Big South Conference took center stage. There was elation for winners, hard felt disappointment for teams falling short. The day's event pitted High Point vs Radford, Campbell vs UNC Asheville, Presbyterian vs Gardner-Webb, and Charleston Southern vs Liberty.

Each game took on its own character and flow. The final score may not quite reflect the competitiveness, but they solidify the outcome, victors play another day. Those winning honors go to Presbyterian, 58 to 51; UNC Asheville, 70 to 42; Liberty 68 to 53; and Radford 72 to 57. And thus we have our semi-finals, set for today: Presbyterian vs. UNC Asheville; and Liberty vs. Radford, beginning at 2:00 pm. Time to let your fan out.

The one and done format leaves little wiggle room for correcting errors. And quite frankly, losing is a bitter pill to swallow for any competitor, irrespective of gender or sport. Rankings nor statistics don't allow anyone to phone in a win. Yesterday's triumph is a great building block, but no assurance of standing when today's dust has settled. Truly, each contest requires that delicate balance between team and individual excellence. Emotions and intensity mean everything. Survival may be because of better execution, but no complaints are lodged when having luck on your side.

The UNC Asheville vs Campbell was a game where one team made their baskets when needed, while the other had a lot of close up shots just not falling. Surprisingly, the winner only exceeded in total shots by one, but took twice as many threes; making four times as many Each had somewhat of a fast pace offense. Asheville came into the tournament as the number 1 seed, and played the role with amassing a half-time lead of 21 points. There would be no Cinderella found slipper at this balling. Take nothing though from Campbell, for they never showed any quit; having a continuum of hustle plays. Unfortunately, they faced a team with too many weapons and equally determined.

The Presbyterian vs Gardner-Webb game started with both teams missing shots. In fact, with a little less than five minutes left in the first quarter, the score was only 6 to 2, Gardner-Webb leading. This

had the initial makings of being a tough defensive game. And then, after missed free throws and a jump ball, in back to back possessions by Gardner, Presbyterian's Aianna Kelly hit two three pointers. And by end of first quarter, Presbyterian lead 15 to 11, never to relinquish the lead. However, this was a game where Presbyterian very much had to want it and take it. Despite trailing by ten points at half-time, Gardner-Webb fought back, outscoring Presbyterian in both the third and fourth quarters, closing within one point with a little over five minutes left in the game, 45 to 44; and only down 3 points with just above 30 seconds left in the game. But it was not to be.

The next two games turned out to be better adjustments in the second half for both respective winners. For Liberty, Charleston battled them tough in the first half, with Liberty only leading 27 to 21. Liberty has a very tall team, by virtue of their centers and forwards. Yet, Charleston guards were not afraid to drive deep into the paint, and benefited when using their bigger lineup. However, by second half, Liberty was simply too much, taking advantage of the smaller lineup used by Charleston.

The High Point vs Radford was indeed a tale of two games in one. Radford was down by ten points by half-time. At one point in the first quarter, High Point was shooting over sixty-two percent, inclusive of 3 three pointers in a row. They also used at times some full court pressing. All said, they amassed as much as a 14 point lead. However, Radford started the third quarter scoring eight unanswered points, eventually outpacing High Point 30 to 5. A complete reversal of fortune. For High Point, in addition to facing Radford's new found wrath, was also unable to get the ball to drop despite some decent chances up close. Wow is the operative word, for Radford's victory.

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