

## Washington State fails to come out on top after 18-point lead against New Mexico State

Washington State faced a tough loss on Wednesday when New Mexico State came back in the second half after they fell behind 18 points.

On Wednesday, December 15 WSU prepared to face off against NMSU for the fourth time ever at the Beasley Coliseum. Even though it was finals week for students, Cougs filled the stands to show support for their team. Despite WSU being #43 in the overall NCAA standings while NMSU stood at #84, New Mexico came out victorious with a 64-61 win.

Prior to Wednesday, New Mexico was on a three-game winning streak after beating Loyola Marymount on Saturday. Washington State was recovering from a difficult loss from the same day against South Dakota State when SDSU Sophomore Baylor Scheierman hit a three-point buzzer-beater that ended the game 74-77.

The last time the pair faced off was in 2019 with the Cougs taking the win 63-54. Throughout Wednesday's game, the Cougs held a strong lead with them being up 35-22 at halftime. With about 18 minutes left Washington was up 18 points. The Aggies continued to close the gap between the scores until the two were tied 60-60 with two minutes left.

NMSU junior Teddy Allen was fouled on a three-point shot by Noah Williams, giving him three free throws which put the Aggies in the lead 63-60. With less than two minutes left, WSU struggled to regain the lead, throwing up

any shot they could with only one free throw going in. One of WSU's top shooters, Tyrell Roberts, was out for the game due to being ill which took a toll on the team's offensive play.

“We’re not shooting well obviously, a guy like Ty really helps us there,” Washington State coach Kyle Smith said, “It looked good at halftime what we were doing there, and then they made some adjustments, they started driving us. They were down 18 and we just let them creep back in. We gave up threes.”

The Cougs have struggled to close out games this season, typically coming in strong in the first half and losing their groove in the second. Washington State has a lot of new players this year and according to coach Kyle Smith, they have struggled with missing practices due to injuries and illnesses which has weighed heavily on the team's performance and cohesiveness.

“Every loss we've had we just let these guys just come over in the second half and just you know, get the lead and win,” sophomore forward Efe Abogidi said, “It hurts, you know. It hurts for that to happen. We just need to get our minds right. That's a big issue for our team right now, everybody needs to be together.”

NMSU junior Sir'Jabari Rice led the team with 22 points shooting 4 from beyond the arc. WSU Senior Michael Flowers led WSU's team in assists and points with 15 points, shooting 5 of 10 from the three-point line, and 3 assists.

The results of the game set WSU back to #7 in the PAC-12 with their previous standing at #6 and pushed NMSU up to #2 in the WAC after standing at #3. Washington State is now 7-4 and New Mexico is 9-2.