

Preposterous finish sinks Clark

South Puget Sound rallies from 20 down to beat Penguins

By PAUL VALENCIA
Columbian staff writer

The gift-giving season is not over yet, despite the wishes of the Clark Penguins.

Clark gave away a 20-point second-half lead, and the South

Puget Sound Clippers got a gift from the basketball heavens Monday night, beating the Penguins on a shot from just inside the half-court line to win the U.S. Army Clark College Holiday Tournament.

"This is the luckiest tournament I've ever played in," acknowledged South Puget Sound's Will Sharp, who scored five points in the game's final 1.3 seconds for a 73-70 victory. "Yes-

terday was a last-second shot. Today was a last-second shot. It's crazy."

Even preposterous.

Sharp beat his man to the hoop for the tying lay-up with 1.3 seconds to play. Clark coach Mike Arnold called a timeout and drew up a long inbound play to give the Penguins a chance at the win. Instead, Sharp stole the pass, took one dribble, and launched his shot from close to

midcourt just prior to the horn.

Arnold took the blame for the way the game ended, saying he needed to do a better job of communicating where he wanted the pass to go in the first place.

"You always look back, shoulda, coulda, woulda, as a coach," he said. "We should have just inbounded the ball and gone to overtime."

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Game recap

■ **END GAME:** South Puget Sound's Will Sharp scored five points in the final 1.3 seconds, giving the Clippers the title in the U.S. Army Clark College Holiday Tournament.

■ **CLARK HIGHLIGHT:** Garrick Ashenfelter scored 18 points to lead the Penguins.

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Easy to say after the fact, but at that point, the Clippers (5-5) had all of the momentum.

Donald Terry, who finished 8 of 15 from 3-point range, had five long bombs in the second half. In fact, the Clark defense was keying on Terry, which gave Sharp room to get to the hoop for the tying basket.

That was a strong move to the basket, nothing lucky about it. But then came the game-winner.

"I didn't even know how much time was left until I heard people yell, 'Shoot it!'" Sharp said. "Lucky."

While the teams will remember how the game ended, Arnold will be thinking about how the game was close enough for any last-second heroics from the Clippers.

"Our problem came when we had a 20-point lead and didn't protect a 20-point lead," Arnold said. "They were going to go on a run. We knew that. And as long as they were climbing back in, their confidence was growing."

Sharp said his team has been a second-half squad all season. This one was extra special,

though, because the Clippers needed a last-second shot from Michael Hall in Sunday's semi-final win over Centralia. Then, to be behind by 20 and win the next night, well, now you understand why the Clippers feel fortunate.

"Our shots started falling, and all of a sudden, we had it down to five points, then it was tied, and then we won," Sharp said.

Clark (6-4) built a big lead in the first half with strong play from the bench. Garrick Ashenfelter made three 3-point shots during a 17-0 run that put the Penguins ahead 41-23. All three shots came after offensive rebounds from Arman Kallan, who had 10 of his 14 boards in the first half.

"I didn't know how much," Ashenfelter said of the run, "but I could just tell everything was clicking and everything was going good."

Derek Thurston and Brandon Jones hit back-to-back 3-pointers early in the second half for a 51-31 lead. Later, an Ashenfelter bucket made it 57-37 with 15 minutes to play. The Clippers, though, would outscore the Penguins 36-13 the rest of the way.

"It's just a tough loss," said Ashenfelter, who led Clark with 18 points. "You learn from this, you build on it."