

# Strickland hits for 44 as Storm get big win

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Long before the first Davidson County Community College basketball game, Storm coach Matt Ridge pointed to Catawba Valley Community College as the standard in the Tarheel Conference.

Perhaps the Storm should carry that label now.

Justin Strickland racked up 44 points as DCCC put on the offensive jets in a 112-99 victory before a loud overflow crowd Tuesday night at Brinkley Gym.

The Storm trailed by four at halftime before blistering the nets for 70 second-half points and pulled away for an impressive win.

"Catawba Valley is traditionally the powerhouse of our conference," Ridge said. "It feels very good to beat these guys in the first game against them in our inaugural season."

Strickland, a 6-2 sophomore, continued to impress. He had 12 rebounds and eight assists to go along with all the scoring. Three of the assists were converted into alley-oop slam dunks by center Justin Reissmann.

Landon Bowers, the Storm's 5-6 dynamo, scored 24 points and dished out 10 assists, while Reissmann scored 15 points and grabbed eight rebounds. W.J. Parks scored nine points and snared nine rebounds.

All of that was enough to lift the Storm, 16-4 overall, to 3-0 in the conference. CVCC fell to 10-7 overall and 1-1 in the conference.

"They're an exceptional team," said CVCC coach Jerry Moore. "They've got good shooters. They've got good rebounders. They've got the whole package deal."

The Buccaneers were led by 6-7 center Mikie Corpening, who scored 24 points. Michaux Christian, Corey Withers and David Hoover each scored 15 points, and Timothy Hinton added 14.

DCCC seized control with a key sequence that featured a lot of hustle just past the midway point in the second half.

With the Storm clinging to a 70-66 lead, Parks jumped in to corral an offensive rebound and fired out to the perimeter to Bowers, who buried a 3-pointer.

Strickland then saw a slight opening and drove the baseline to convert a three-point play. Finally, Bowers, while leading a fast break, pulled up as if to shoot a 3-pointer but instead whipped a pass to Nate Wilkins for a backdoor layup and a 78-66 lead.

"Our guys are really learning to play together," Ridge said. "We teach them to get the rebound and look for a shooter."

From that point on, the visiting Buccaneers couldn't get closer than six. Just about everything the Storm did clicked in the final 20 minutes.

"We didn't feel like we played real well in the first half," Strickland said. "We were giving them a lot of offensive boards. In the second half, I thought we did a much better job."

CVCC made a couple of runs and cut the lead to 90-84 with 3:50 left after six consecutive points.

But the Storm hit 16 straight free throws down the stretch to get the margin back over double figures and pull away.

"If you make free throws, you're going to win games," Ridge said.

The first half featured eight lead changes and four ties, with the Buccaneers heading into locker room with a 46-42 lead.

DCCC made its move early in the second half pulled even at 52-52 when Parks stole the ball and drove in for a layup.

The Bucs appeared to gain some momentum when Ridge got hit with a technical for arguing an out-of-bounds call. Jordan Smith hit both free throws, and then Corpening scored on a reverse layup to put his team back in front 57-55.

But Cody Furr took an inbound pass and fired in a 3-pointer from the top of the circle to give his team a 58-57 lead with 14:21 left. The Storm never trailed again.

DCCC hosts Caldwell Community College at 2 p.m. Saturday.

Notes: The Storm were 32-for-37 from the free throw line and Strickland was 12-for-13. ... DCCC held a 48-37 rebounding edge. ... CVCC's Christian was 5-for-8 from 3-point range.