Loyola tops DePaul for 1st time since '89

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There was a time as an eighth grader that Cully Payne dreamed DePaul would be his college basketball home.

Payne instead delivered decisive blows Saturday to help Loyola end 23 years of frustration with a stunning 69-61 victory over the Blue Demons on Saturday at Allstate Arena.

"Beating a city rival is a big deal," said Payne, a Rambler junior who scored a game-high 24 points -- including nine down the stretch -- as Loyola broke a 12-game series losing streak dating back to 1989. "We remember what they did to us last year. My mindset coming out was just handle their pressure.

"The guys who don't play a ton pressed us like crazy (in practice) the last four days and they had us totally ready."

The win was the seventh in eight games for the Ramblers (9-3) while the Blue Demons (9-4) saw a seven-game winning run end.

"Cully Payne kind of controlled the game," DePaul coach Oliver Purnell said. "He started giving us problems right from the opening tap, driving the ball and getting other folks involved. And then he hit some big shots down the stretch.

"He played a whale of a game."

DePaul struggled with shooting, going 10 of 29 (34.5 percent) from the field and 8 of 14 (57.1 percent) from the line in the second half.

"We just couldn't make free throws today," Demon guard Brandon Young said. "We've got to stay more focused at the line, take our time. But it didn't just come down to free throws. We didn't come out ready to play."

Young paced DePaul with 18 points while Worrel Clahar added 10.

Loyola forward Christian Thomas collected 12 points and a game-high 10 rebounds while Devon Turk added 10 points.

Loyola grabbed its first lead at 38-37 on Payne's three-pointer at the 17:14 mark of the second half. DePaul's Donnavan Kirk replied with a short jumper, but the Ramblers went back ahead at 40-39 on Ben Averkamp's bank shot with 15:50 showing and never trailed again.
The Ramblers opened a 52-46 lead on Payne's second three-pointer with 8:14 showing and pumped his fist in the air in celebration as the Blue Demons called a time out.

Thomas followed with a short jumper to make it 54-46 and the lead grew from there to 59-47 on a Jordan Hicks' three-pointer with 6:14 showing.

"(This) was about continuing to grind and work," Ramblers coach Porter Moser said. "This was a great culture game for these guys to keep working and fight through against a team that doesn't let up. ... I'm happy for these guys to watch their hard work pay off."

DePaul led by as many as eight points midway through the first half, but Loyola chipped away and turned it into a see-saw contest with four ties down the stretch. Thomas forced a 33-33 tie just before halftime with a put-back for two of 10 first half points.

"I thought in the first half we had a chance to really get something going," Purnell said. "I thought we let up off the gas a little bit and Loyola took advantage of it."

Young and Jamee Crockett paced the Blue Demons with eight first half points each.

Cleveland Melvin left the game with 10:23 left in the first half when he sustained a cut near his right eye after he hit the court following a battle for a rebound. He was treated on the bench and returned with 7:04 showing.

Both teams begin respective conference seasons next Wednesday. DePaul hosts Seton Hall in its eighth Big East opener while Loyola travels to Valparaiso to kick off Horizon League play.

NOTES: Loyola had already achieved a milestone even before the DePaul game, exceeding its win total (seven) from all of 2011-12. ... The Ramblers last beat the Blue Demons on Jan. 21, 1989, a 70-69 decision at the now-demolished International Amphitheatre. DePaul topped Loyola 69-58 on Dec. 7, 2011, behind 13 points from Moses Morgan. ... Loyola is celebrating the 50th anniversary of its 1963 NCAA basketball championship with a series of events, including a website dedicated to Illinois' lone national champions (www.Loyola63.com). ... DePaul's Melvin streak of 26 straight games in double figures came to an end. He had been tied for third in the nation. ... Melvin and Brandon Young are the only Blue Demons to start all 13 games this season. ... Ben Averkamp's nine points gave him 1.777 for his career as he moved ahead of Jim Tilman (1965-68), Vic Rouse (1961-64) and Keith Carter (1984-89) into 23rd place on Loyola's all-time scoring list. Alfredrick Hughes (1981-85) is the all-time leader with 2,914 points.