



University of Connecticut Huskies guard Kemba Walker holds up the NCAA trophy with his teammates after they defeated the Butler Bulldogs in the men's final NCAA Final Four college championship game in Houston, Texas on April 4. (Reuters/Jeff Haynes)

HOUSTON — Midnight finally came for Cinderella, with Butler's loss to the University of Connecticut Huskies, 53-41 Monday night at Houston's Reliant Stadium.

But it seems that it wasn't just Butler's carriage that turned into a pumpkin.

Neither Butler nor UConn could get the "pumpkin" in the basket.

With the Butler Bulldogs leading the NCAA championship game 22-19 at the end of the first half, it sealed the lowest 20 minutes of scoring since 1946, when Henry Iba's Oklahoma A&M team defeated North Carolina, 43-40.

At the end of the first half, Butler's coach Brad Stevens noted that this game would be a "grinder," but tempered that by adding that both sides were playing very hard.

But he also mentioned a game consists of two halves, and Butler's were nearly as dissimilar as Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde.

Overall, the final game of the NCAA tournament focused on tough defense, but the lack of scoring was stunning.

Butler's field goal percentage was just under 19 percent and UConn's was just over 34 percent.

As for three pointers, Butler hit 27 percent of theirs, but UConn was at a hard-to-fathom 9 percent.

Still, this was an ideal game in a lot of ways.

Good defense is more exciting than boundless scoring.

For a team like Butler, UConn's resolve resulted in an uncharacteristically low field goal percentage, and for UConn, it elevated the contributions of Alex Oriaki, who had a stellar 11 rebounds and four blocks.

During this defensive display, the lone offensive note of the evening belonged to UConn freshman Jeremy Lamb, who scored 9 of his 12 points in the second half to seal the Huskies'

win.

His well-placed scoring surge coincided with two Butler droughts of just over 7 and 6 minutes.

Butler's "Mack the Knife" Shelvin Mack scored only 13 points - approximately 9 points under his season average.

But UConn's Kemba Walker, the much touted future NBA prospect, countered with only 16 - nearly 8 points below his season average.

Only one of many examples of what "winning ugly" is all about.

Defensively, Butler acquitted itself well.

But offensively, this was a nightmare Butler should remember, and learn from in coming seasons.