

# Parker benched for first half in Homecoming

Almost 60 family members and friends of Candace Parker attended third-ranked Tennessee's game Wednesday at No. 15 DePaul, but they were left cheering for Parker's teammates when the game began.



AP Photo/Nam Y. Huh

Benched for the first half for missing curfew, Candace Parker missed her first start in 84 collegiate games.

Parker, who is from Naperville, Ill., a Chicago suburb, sat out the entire first half as Tennessee took a 53-34 halftime lead. Parker was benched for violating the team curfew.

"I apologized to my teammates, my coaches, my family and friends and Chicago in general for not being able to play in the first half," Parker said. "Coach is very strict on discipline and I broke the rules so I suffered the consequences."

This wasn't the homecoming Parker had envisioned when coach Pat Summitt scheduled the game. Parker didn't start for the first time in her career.

It was easy to spot Parker's family. They were sitting right behind the Tennessee bench wearing shirts with her photo on the front. On the back was Parker's No. 3. Her mom had the word "Mama" above the number.

"I thought those were really cute," Parker said. "My mom totally surprised me."

Summitt has always tried to give her Tennessee players a chance to play near their home before they graduate. Though the Lady Vols have played at Notre Dame since Parker joined the team, Wednesday marked the first time she felt really at home.

Tennessee coach Pat Summitt was torn on not playing Parker.

"I wanted to start her," the Hall of Fame coach said. "With our rules, we have to be consistent. I'm glad people got to see her play."

Parker started the second half to a rousing cheer from the crowd. After drawing two quick offensive fouls, she finally scored on a layup. She finished with 17 points as Tennessee scored over 100 points for the first time since last season in a 102-68 rout.

*The Associated Press contributed to this report.*

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