

BULLDOGS HOLD TIGERS

MILES SCORES 11 IN 38-27 LOSS

CLOSE CALL DROPS TIGERS TO 17th IN A.P. POLL

Like modern-day Daniels in basketball shoes, UNC-A's Bulldogs marched into the Littlejohn Coliseum to do battle with the mighty Clemson Tigers this past weekend. Eight thousand hostile fans met the UNC-A squad as they entered "The Tiger Den." The match was Clemson's final home game of the season and the large crowd came out to honor the Tiger seniors and watch their team destroy their humble opponents from Asheville. Prior to the opening tip-off an awards ceremony was given for Clemson seniors Bob Fuzy, Bobby Conrad, John Campbell and Billy Williams. The Clemson band played "Hold That Tiger" and aroused the hometown crowd. The Bulldogs entered the Tiger's den to the theme from "Rocky" and took the air out of the Clemson game plan and their fans with a slowdown strategy that worked to near perfection. Although the Tigers were able to hold on for a 38-27 victory, UNC-A was able to hold the Tigers down to their lowest scoring game since 1969. The score was also the lowest for both teams in Littlejohn history.

The Tigers are nearly invincible in their home den. Coming into the match with UNC-A, the Tigers had a seventeen game winning streak in their home arena. At home this year, the Tigers were 15-0. Clemson was rated tenth in the nation while the Bulldogs at 10-15 stood thirteenth in the Dunkel ratings for District 26 of the NAIA. The same Dunkel rating system installed Clemson as a thirty-eight point favorite over UNC-A prior to the contest. Clemson, at 18-6, is in fourth place in the ACC and has been invited to play in this year's NIT. The Tigers won the NIT last year with an overtime win over Kentucky.

The Tigers controlled the opening tipoff and missed on their first attempt from the field. The Bulldogs took the ball and called a time out with only fourteen seconds gone. Coach Green afterwards explained, "I thought they would start their three big men, but they started Fuzy, and that kind of upset our game plan. I had started Emory but we wanted to get another ball handler into the lineup." JoJo Hill came off the bench to give Green the ball handler he wanted.

Green's game plan was apparent from the opening minute of play. UNC-A wanted to play a ball control game, keeping the pace down and playing for one good shot each trip down the court. In their first possession of the game, UNC-A held the ball for a minute and fifteen seconds before Hill was called for charging into Clemson forward Billy Williams. UNC-A regained control as Dave Stickel hauled down a rebound from the Tiger boards and UNC-A again called time with 18:25 to play in the half. A Billy Williams steal and layup put Clemson ahead 2-0 at 17:28. The Bulldogs came back and tied the score for the only time in the game on a George Gilbert jumper from inside. The Tigers launched a full court press early in an attempt to foil the Bulldog game plan. The ball control of Gilbert and Hill in the backcourt evaded the Tigers' press time and again. UNC-A trailed by two points, 4-2, when Hill was again called for charging. The foul was again drawn by Williams who showed that he is not only a fine basketball player but a fine dramatic actor as well. Eddie Latta kept the Bulldogs within two with a jumper from the top of the key at the 14:45 mark. Charleston Miles added a steal and slam dunk to make the score 10-8 after eight minutes of play.

The Littlejohn audience didn't care for the Bulldog strategy and heckled UNC-A's passing game. Despite the catcalls and chants of "Boring, Boring," the plucky Bulldogs kept to their pre-game plan and controlled the ball for three quarters of the game. Clemson seemed confused by the Bulldog attack and unwilling or perhaps unable to defend against the slowdown game.

Junior forward Dave Stickel played his most aggressive game ever under the boards for UNC-A. Dave drew three fouls in the closing minutes of the first half. At 6'8" and 205 lbs., Dave gave a two inch and forty pound advantage to his Tiger opponent, John Campbell. On the game, Dave pulled in nine rebounds while Clemson starters Campbell and 6'10" center Larry Nance had seven and ten respectively.

Charleston Miles put the Bulldogs within three points, 18-15 with a three point play assisted by Hill. Clemson stretched its lead to ten, 25-15, on free throws. With forty seconds to play in the half, JoJo drew his fifth foul and was out of the game. Billy Williams put Clemson up by twelve with a jumper from the corner in the final second.

The Bulldogs' slowdown strategy worked well in the opening half and kept UNC-A within striking distance. In the closing half, the Bulldogs defense tightened up around the Tiger shooters and UNC-A appeared on the verge of pulling off an upset of monumental proportion. The Littlejohn crowd was silent as the upstart Asheville squad shut off the Tiger offense for a full ten minutes of the second half. Ogden Braxton came up with two steals for UNC-A that startled the Tiger's home fans. Miles and Gilbert field goals brought UNC-A back to within eight points. Five minutes and twenty seconds into the second half, Clemson scored its first points of the half on a jump shot by Fred Gillim. The Tiger defense was able to force the Bulldogs into twenty turnovers in the game, but on five separate occasions, UNC-A was able to control the ball for over a minute before surrendering possession.

George Gilbert kept UNC-A within eight with a jumper at 12:04 and was injured on the following play when Charleston Miles turned away a Clemson shot. David Clark came off the bench to replace the captain. Gilbert received an ovation from the Littlejohn crowd when he returned to the game minutes later.

After only forty seconds, George again had to be replaced as the pain in his right leg made him helpless on the court. George returned a second time at the 7:34 mark as Larry Nance scored only the third Clemson point of the half on a free throw. For twelve and a half minutes, UNC-A had held Clemson to a mere three points.

Eddie Latta silenced the Littlejohn audience as his twenty foot jumper brought UNC-A to within six, 29-23, with eight minutes to play. Later, Green would say of the play, "At that point, you could've stuck a knife into one of the Clemson coaches and they wouldn't have bled. We'd really thrown a scare into them."

Free throws saved the game for Clemson and proved to be the Bulldogs' undoing. The tight zone UNC-A presented permitted Clemson to convert only two of sixteen attempts from the field in the second half. UNC-A outshot the Tigers from the field throughout the game, hitting for 35% of their attempts while holding the Tigers to a 32% rate. Clemson committed only six fouls in the second half and sent only Charleston Miles to the free throw line for UNC-A's sole charity toss. Seven of the eleven points Clemson scored in the second half came from the free throw line. The Bulldogs fouled Clemson six times in the final seven minutes, providing the Tigers with their slim victory margin.

After the game, Tiger coach Bill Foster summed up the game and complimented the ballhandling of Gilbert, Hill and Braxton by saying, "I don't think that we were sharp today, we just didn't play very well or shoot very well this week at all. They had those three midgets at guard that we couldn't pry the ball from."

The performance of the "three midgets," as he called them, will certainly cost Foster and his squad when the ratings come out again this week. Following their loss to Duke and their poor showing against the underdog Bulldogs this week, the Tigers can be expected to drop to the bottom of the Top 20 ranks.

The performance of both Charleston Miles and Dave Stickel won praise from Coach Green in his post game conference with writers. "I was pleased to see that our inside men didn't back off from those animals --- Campbell, Wyatt and all the rest of them. Those guys gave up two or three inches and hung in."

Despite the loss, UNC-A's performance against the Tigers is expected to improve the Bulldogs' standing in this week's Dunkel ratings. We didn't beat the Tigers but it's safe to say that the little squad from UNC-A scared the hell out of the mighty Tigers. It'll be a long time before they'll invite us back to the Tiger Den for a rematch. The squad of Daniels from Asheville came out of the den on Saturday with every reason to hold their heads up high.

