

Sports

Men's basketball team makes it to the semifinals, beats Winthrop 69-61

Anne Kuester
Sports Editor

For the first time since the 1990 season, the men's basketball team advanced to the second round of tournament play. The Bulldogs beat Winthrop, the sixth seed team, 69-61 last Thursday night at Liberty University.

"I am very happy for our kids. This is the first tournament game we've won since I've been at UNC-Asheville," said Coach Randy Wiel said.

With point guard Vincent Krieger sick with the flu, the team was somewhat at a disadvantage. Strong play from Josh Kohn, Josh Pittman, and Rob-

ert Stevenson balanced out the offensive attack for the Bulldogs.

Kohn scored 22 points, hitting five out of 11 3-pointers, making him the fifth all-time highest scorer in UNCA's history with 1,456 points.

Also, since UNCA went Division I ten years ago, Kohn has become UNCA's all-time leading scorer.

Pittman would finish with 15 points, seven of which came from the free-throw line. He also would pull down seven offensive rebounds and two defensive ones.

Pittman had two assists, one block, and three steals.

Stevenson scored ten points for the Bulldogs, four rebounds, one block, and two steals.

Victor Newman scored seven

The first points of the game came from Winthrop's Todd Pigford at the free-throw line. Krieger answered by pushing

matched each other, keeping the score close until the last two minutes of the game, when Winthrop was unable to score. The teams headed to the locker rooms with the Bulldogs ahead 41-38.

Both teams had 16 rebounds in the first half. However, Winthrop was dominant on the defensive boards with ten to UNCA's seven.

In the locker room Wiel told his team to hit the boards harder.

"I mainly wanted our guards to do a better job rebounding," Wiel said.

Kohn opened up the second half with a 3-pointer, with an assist from Pittman. In the past

Kohn has always put on a strong performance against Winthrop.

"I think it's by chance. I get looks, shots drop," Kohn said. "It doesn't matter who we play though, you've got to be ready."

In the second half, the Bulldogs shooting percentage dropped from 43.8 to 30.4, but their defense caused Winthrop to shoot 24.1 percent.

"In the second half, we got the second shots at crucial times. Late in the game, we got offensive rebounds to start up our offense," Wiel said. "You prepare for every team differently and I'm just glad we did what we had to do at the end of the game to win."

"I knew Winthrop was playing good. We are even. We aren't better than them, and they aren't better than us. The one that's having the good night is going to win the game, and today we were fortunate."

--Coach Randy Wiel

points and had nine rebounds. Six of the nine were defensive. Jeff Coble contributed seven points and four assists.

the ball up the court and pulling up for a jumper.

In the first half, the teams

Bulldogs lose 73-60 to Liberty in semifinals of tournament

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The Bulldogs went into the semifinals game against Liberty University last Friday, facing more than just the Liberty Flames.

The team played against a team with a huge home-court advantage, and they did it with two of their team members sick with the flu. The Bulldogs lost 73-60.

"There's only one (team) that's going to go all the way. So this was our loss. I thought we did some nice things this season, and hopefully next year we can build on this," Coach Randy Wiel said.

The Bulldogs saw a strong performance from senior Victor Newman. He scored ten points, and pulled down ten rebounds, seven were on the defensive end of the court.

Another senior, William Coley, scored 11 points and had eight re-

bounds, six defensively and two offensively.

Coley fouled out with 2:29 remaining in the game. Robert Stevenson had ten points.

Vincent Krieger, the team's point guard was unable to contribute in his normal fashion.

The day before Krieger had a temperature of 103 degrees. Senior Ralf Melis was also sick.

"I thought all the other guys chipped in and we played with Josh Kohn at point guard for the most part. He hasn't played point guard for two years," Wiel said. "He only does it in practice, and that limits his offensive abilities too."

Last Wednesday Kohn was named First Team All-Conference player for the Big South.

He averaged 13.9 points a game, 3.3 assists, and led the conference in three pointers with 83.

Against Liberty Kohn went one for

seven from the 3-point line and ended the night with 11 points.

"We were pretty much handicapped playing without Vincent Krieger. He makes us go," Wiel said.

"We're pretty much an up-tempo team, and when we don't have that it limits us."

In the first half of play, the Bulldogs' shooting percentage was 51.9, while the Flames shot 44.4 percent.

The team looked focused and did not seem to be affected by the crowd. It was obvious that Liberty's Peter Aluma was going to be a problem for UNCA.

"It's nice when you have size like Aluma, it creates a big problem. We are very small, with Victor at 6'7" and Coley at 6'5," Weil said.

Aluma finished the game with 19 points and three blocks.

Ten of the 19 points were off dunks that would ignite the crowd at Liberty.

"We just had to do the best we could and just try to contain him," Pittman said. "He was a big factor."

Pittman also said that without Krieger and Melis at full strength, the team was out of sync from the start, and that the crowd was a factor in the game.

"We tried to focus on the game but that crowd boosted them a lot. Plus, the referees were a little hard on us tonight," Pittman said.

In the second half, the Bulldogs defensive intensity was consistent with the first half, but their offense fell short of what was needed to win the game.

UNCA shot 23.1 percent while the Flames shot 46.2 percent.

"We scratch and fight and we rely on shooting the ball well and solid defense," Wiel said.

"Our defense was pretty good today. In the second half, I wish we would have made some more shots.

We got shots, the shots just didn't drop, and that's basketball."

Wiel said that Aluma was an intimidating factor, and it was hard to get shots inside because of his presence.

However, Aluma was not a one-man show for Liberty.

The Flames had three other players score in double figures. Larry Jackson had 16, Marcus White had 13, and Erik Sorenson scored 11.

"We don't worry about one particular player, you worry about the team. We worry much more about what we do," said Wiel. "If we do what we do well, it should take care of them."

Wiel said that he would like to see the tournament held in a neutral site in the future, but realizes that that would cost the conference money.

"It's pretty nice to play in front of a crowd where 7,000 yell for you and 25 for the other team," Wiel said. "It was a vicious home-court advantage."

Women's basketball team heads to the Big South Conference Tournament

Nick Foster
Staff Writer

Women's basketball teams in the Big South Conference will begin tournament play on Thursday in Radford, Va. On the horizon for the winner is a trip to the NCAA Tournament.



Photo by Michael Taylor

The women's basketball team huddles up to talk a play over during one of their last practices before they leave for the Big South Conference tournament.

UNCA, 4-10 in the conference and 6-20 overall, enters the tournament as the number seven seed and will face the host Radford Highlanders at 8:00 p.m. on Thursday. Radford, 10-4 in the conference and 14-11 overall, is seeded number two and is the defending tournament champions.

"Our players know what they are capable of doing," head coach Ray Ingram said. "It depends on whether we can put good play together for 40 minutes, three times in a row. If we can do that, I think we can win the tournament."

"I feel

very good about our chances in this game because we know we can play with them," Ingram said. "We played Radford very well here losing only by five, and in the first half of the game at Radford we played them well."

Radford won that game 86-58, but was up by only six points at halftime. The Highlanders beat the Bulldogs earlier this season 86-81 in Justice Center.

According to Ingram, the final score of 86-58 can be deceiving because the team's leading scorer and rebounder, Vicki Giffin, didn't play in the second half.

"There is no reason for us not to go into this game feeling that our chances are very good," Ingram said. "Last year we played them in the tournament and with two minutes left in the game, we were down by only four." The final of the game between the two teams in last year's tournament was 85-74.

The Bulldogs finished the regular season in a winning fashion beating the Charleston Southern Lady Bucs (CSU) on Saturday night.

Center Candy Credito is one of four players who will be making their first trip to a Big South Conference Tournament.

According to Credito, the Bulldog's confidence is up and was boosted by the victory over CSU on Saturday.

Giffin will be going to her third tournament and feels the team finished the regular season on a positive note. "With the win on Saturday and a good practice on Sunday, the team is heading to Radford with a positive attitude," Giffin said.

According to Ingram, UNCA's four conference wins were good ones. The Bulldogs beat the first place Spartans

of UNC Greensboro (UNCG) at home and had a 19 point victory at fourth place Coastal Carolina (CCU). UNCA also beat CSU and Liberty this season.

"We've had a very roller coaster type season at least as far as emotionally," Ingram said. "The players have been up and down as individuals because they have played good and bad. In between those good wins were some disappointing losses."

According to Credito, the team needs to stay focused on the task at hand and not look ahead to who they would play if they win on Thursday. "Concentration and execution are some of the things we need to do to come away victorious," Credito said.

According to Giffin, UNCA must be intense. "We have to come out with intensity at both ends of the floor to be successful," Giffin said.

Radford's Lisa Howard has led the conference in three-point shooting for much of this season. The Highlanders possess another good three-point shooter in freshman

Kim Hairston. This duo in Radford's backcourt could help determine the outcome of this quarterfinal matchup.

"To be effective against Radford, we need rebounding," Credito said. "We also have to get back on defense."

The number one seeded Spartans of UNCG will face the eighth seeded Liberty Flames at 1:00 p.m. in the tournament opener. The Spartans were the preseason favorite to win the conference tournament this year with a predicted number one finish.

The number four seed, CCU, will play the fifth seeded Winthrop Lady Eagles in another quarterfinal matchup on Thursday at 3:00 p.m. In the other quarterfinal game, the third seeded University of Maryland-Baltimore County (UMBC) will play the sixth seeded CSU at 6:00 p.m. With a victory on Thursday, UNCA

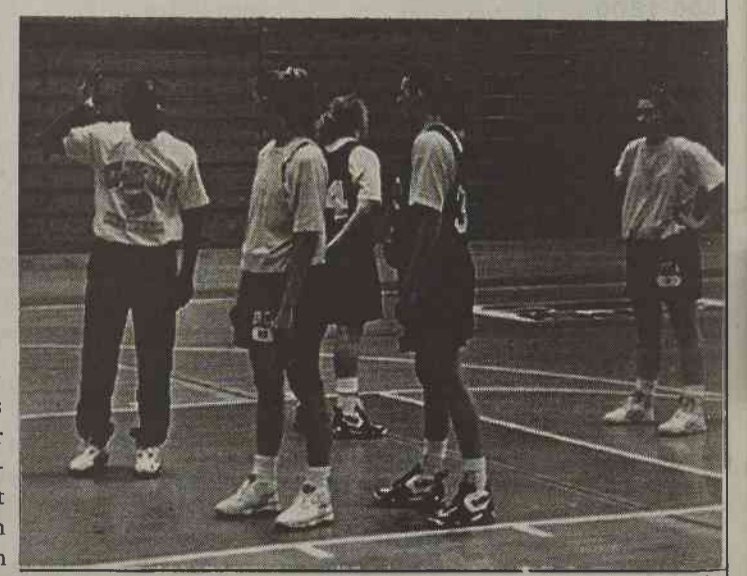


Photo by Michael Taylor

UNCA's women's basketball head coach Ray Ingram talks to players Jessica Januskeski and Candy Credito during practice. The team left for their conference tournament yesterday and play Radford tonight at 8:00 p.m. in Virginia.