

Men's Basketball earns a trip to National Tourney

KENICHI YAKOTA
Staff Writer

A successful season for the Methodist Men's basketball team landed them in the NCAA National Tournament.

Beating Shenandoah with a score of 72-58, the Monarchs took home hardware and the conference championship at the USA South Athletic Conference Tournament last Saturday.

Coach Smith describes the key component for the success of the team as defense, which led the team to victory in the semi-finals against North Carolina Wesleyan College on Friday.

"They were up on us by ten points in the first half and we kept them down to 27 points in second half. We played well very defensively," Smith said.

In the championship game, the Monarchs shot down two of Shenandoah's leading scorers.

"Those two scorers make 20 points on average, but they only scored 10 points. We thought that was very important in the game," Smith said. "In the first five minutes of the second half, we put it away by getting up 24 points. I think the game was over at that point."

Three Monarch players received accolades; Sam Porter won tournament MVP while Arthur Hatch and Seth Thomas made all-tournament team.

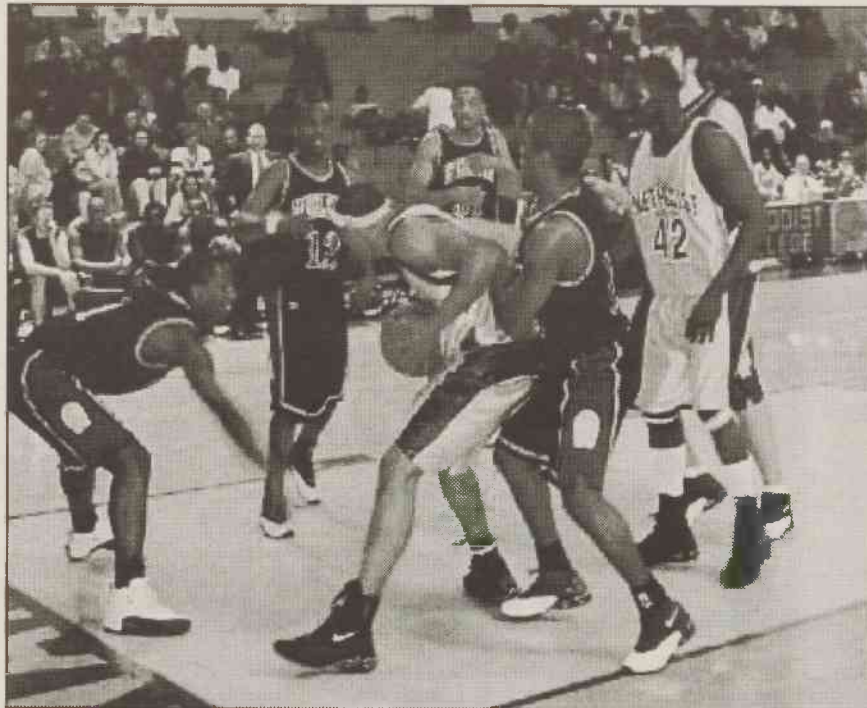
Smith's team is now preparing for the first match in the national tournament.

"We practice just like we always practice," Smith said, "working on the defense, a lot of shooting, running offense. There might be more energy because the guys are excited about the national tournament. However, I am not changing my practice plans, because we did something right to get here."

As far as the actual game, Smith commented, "We want to continue to play good on defense and pressure the guards. We can run on them if we get rebounds or steals. We also want to continue to playing well with intensity and confidence. We played with a lot of confidence last week."

This is Smith's first time leading Methodist to the NCAA national tournament as head coach. The last time Methodist went to the national tournament was in 1997 where Smith went as the assistant coach.

"It is pretty exciting. The players



Eddie Lamar and Sam Porter fight for the rebound in this game against Wesleyan. Lamar has been a key player on the basketball team all semester. The smallTALK staff would like to congratulate the team and wish them well on their trip to the Nationals.

and I are very excited about it. But, as a coach, my job is to keep players even. Not to get too excited. Not to get down either," Smith said. "The ultimate goal is the national title, but we will take one game at a time, and prepare for the next game."

Monarch Men's basketball team left for Salem, Va., where the national tournament takes place. Monarchs will play at 7 p.m. tonight against the 12th- ranked Randolph-Macon College.

Athlete Feature: Lowell Fischer

T.C. SESSOMS
Staff Writer

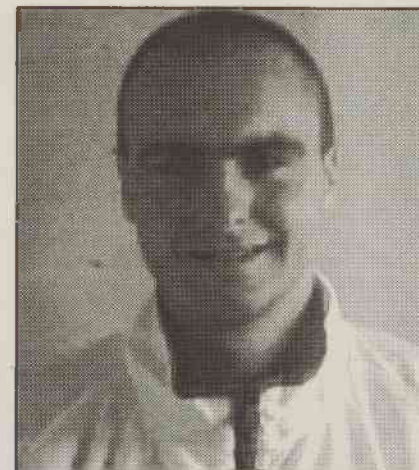
Senior Lowell Fischer is a key player on the Methodist Men's tennis team. He is also no stranger to adversity. His tennis career at Methodist was seriously endangered during his freshman year after he suffered from a shoulder injury, and to make things worst earlier this year he was on crutches for 2 months after an unfortunate roommate tackle during a football game (ankle/knee). After the proper rehabilitation and serious encouragement from his team mates he is returning back to the team for his final semester here at Meth-

odist. Lowell worked his way through try outs and earned the number five spot on the team. His performance verses North Carolina Central University this year proved how much he wanted to get back to the top. He won his matches, 6-0, 6-0 in singles and teamed up with Mark Ryman to produce a 8-4 victory in Men's doubles.

The highlight of Lowell's tennis career at Methodist came against Savannah College of Art and Design. It was his biggest comeback ever in competitive tennis. He came back and won after losing the first set, being down 5-2 in the second and third sets, and fighting off 5 match points down the stretch.

The courts are not the only place that Lowell has been known to shine. He has maintained his GPA around 3.0 and is one of the best students the Professional Tennis Management Program has to offer. He worked at Treyburn Country Club in Durham, North Carolina last summer as the Assitant Tennis Professional. He hopes to take the skills he mastered there into the future as he works to become a head tennis professional one day.

When asked what will he miss most about his time playing career at Methodist he responded, "I will miss playing with and against all of the great players here, as well as coach Roberts and the entire PTM staff."



Lowell Fischer is a Senior here at Methodist College. His sister Tanya Fischer also attends Methodist College and plays for the Softball team. Fischer hopes to become a Tennis Professional one day.