

THE BLUE BANNER

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WAR BEGINS



JOLENE HAYMANS/GUEST PHOTOGRAPHER

The UNCA men's basketball bench watch as the Bulldogs and Texas Southern Tigers fight for the lead in the final minutes of the game.

Bulldogs win thriller

Andre Smith leads UNCA to overtime victory in NCAA Tournament opener against Texas Southern, advancing to a game against top-seeded Texas.

Jason McGill
Sports Editor

The UNCA men's basketball team needed overtime to defeat the Texas Southern University (TSU) Tigers 92-84 in UNCA's first-ever appearance in the NCAA Tournament Mar. 18.

A crowd of 7,711, including approximately 100 UNCA supporters, watched the Bulldogs win their NCAA play-in game held in Dayton, Ohio.

Jolene Haymans, a junior political science major with secondary education licensure, took a bus that left UNCA early Tuesday to make the 14-hour round trip to Dayton.



JOLENE HAYMANS/GUEST PHOTOGRAPHER

Chancellor Jim Mullen and Vice Chancellor Wayne McDevitt look on as the Bulldogs advance in the NCAA Tournament.

"To be able to watch it was really a once in a lifetime chance," said Haymans. "Close games are always nerve-racking. This one happened to go our way and no UNCA fan could be happier right now."

"You could really see a collaboration between the freshman spunk and energy and the senior wisdom and leadership. It just came together better than ever."

The Bulldogs are the first team from the Big South Conference (BSC) to win an NCAA Tournament game and only the third team in NCAA history to win their match after entering the tournament field with a losing record.

The Bulldogs ended the BSC season with an overall record of 14-16 and 7-7 in conference play but won the BSC Championship and earned

a trip to the NCAA Tournament after dethroning four-time defending champion, Winthrop University.

Senior point guard Andre Smith played 40 minutes and used his team-high 28 points to lead the Bulldogs past the Southwestern Athletic Conference (SWAC) Champion Tigers.

Smith's stellar play included grabbing six rebounds and dishing out four assists.

Ten of his 28 points came during an overtime period in which Smith carried the Bulldogs and UNCA never trailed. Smith's performance came off the heels of earning BSC Tournament MVP honors.

"We got in the huddle, and my teammates told me 'it's your time,'" said Smith. "They were looking to me and I just wanted to help my team."

"I just looked at it as if we were going to lose. I was going to lose with an empty gun.

"When it got to overtime, just as we got back to the bench, some of the coaches said, 'Are we going to lose in overtime?' We said we wouldn't. That's just been our motto."

The Bulldogs earned the win in true team effort with even scoring and rebounding. Sophomore forward Bryan McCullough chipped in 15 points and nine rebounds before fouling out at the end of regulation.

Senior center Ben McGonagill scored 12 points and pulled down five rebounds, ending his streak of four-straight double-doubles, before fouling out in overtime.

Senior guard Alex Kragel knocked down 37' from beyond the three-point arc and finished with 14 points.

Freshman forward Chad Mohn

McCullough with a team-high nine rebounds. Sophomore forward Joseph Barber started and gave the Bulldogs 11 points to go along with his three offensive rebounds.

Sophomore forward Allen Lovett played his best game of the season as he led the Tigers against his former team with 28 points on 10-20 shooting and a game-high 14 rebounds.

Lovett played for UNCA during the 2000-2001 season before transferring to TSU for personal reasons. Lovett left the game shortly in overtime with a leg cramp.

The match featured 14 ties and 11 lead changes as both teams struggled to make a decisive run. TSU's nine-point lead in the second half saw the furthest either squad could pull away.

The Bulldogs used three clutch three-pointers from Kragel to cut into the Tiger lead after losing a four-point lead at the half.

They key to the Bulldog win became poor free throw shooting down the stretch by the Tigers. TSU went 14 of 31 to shoot 45 percent, well below their season average, while the Bulldogs shot 65 percent from the charity stripe.

"We just didn't take care of business," said Lovett. "We wanted to play Texas and now we're going home. They didn't outplay us, they just made their free throws."

The Bulldogs enjoyed a four-point lead with 17 seconds remaining in regulation, but missed two of four free throws down the stretch to seal the game.

Junior Tiger forward Lionel Willis forced the overtime after tipping in a Lovett miss with three seconds left on the clock.

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Hussein refuses to heed Bush's 48 hour deadline. U.S. begins air strikes of 'selective targets' in Iraq.

Dearborn McCorkle
News Editor

President Bush addressed the nation at 10:15 p.m. last night confirming the beginning of military action against Iraq.

"American and coalition forces are in the early stages of military operations to disarm Iraq, to free its people and to defend the world from grave danger," said Bush.

Air strikes began against "selective targets of military importance" in Baghdad about 5:30 a.m. Thursday (9:30 p.m. ET Wednesday).

Coalition forces fired cruise missiles against "a leadership target of opportunity," according to CNN.com.

F117 Stealth fighters and "multiple cruise missiles from U.S. warships," were fired in a "decapitation attack" targeting Saddam Hussein before the war officially started, according to CNN.com.

Whether the mission succeeded is not yet known.

Missiles also struck Iraqi cable repeater sites, command and control sites and at least one Al Ababil surface-to-surface missile launcher, according to CNN.com.

Seventeen Iraqi soldiers surrendered to U.S. troops earlier Wednesday.

Bush told the American people that efforts in diplomacy with Iraq had failed in an address to the nation Mar. 17.

Bush gave Hussein and his sons 48 hours to leave Iraq or face military action. "All the decades of deceit and cruelty have now reached an end," said Bush in his speech.

"Saddam Hussein and his sons must leave Iraq within 48 hours. Their refusal to do so will result in military conflict commenced at the time of our choosing."

The Iraqi government's aggressive tendencies and support of terrorists networks presents a danger to peace, according to Bush.

"The regime has a history of reckless aggression in the Middle East," said Bush. "It has a deep hatred of America and our friends and it has aided, trained and harbored terrorists, including operatives of Al Qaeda."

Bush cited Hussein's past use of chemical and biological weapons, intelligence indicating the Iraqi government continues to possess and conceal these weapons and its active aiding of terrorist groups as justification for a military strike. "The danger is clear," said Bush.

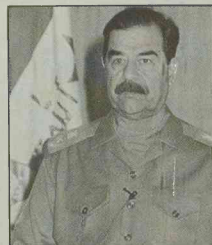
"Using chemical, biological or, one day, nuclear weapons obtained with the help of Iraq, the terrorists could fulfill their stated ambitions and kill thousands or hundreds of thousands of innocent people in our country or any other. Before the day of horror can come, before it is too late to act, this danger will be removed."

In recent months, the Bush administration has indicated a relationship between the Iraqi government and the Al Qaeda, who claimed responsibility for the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks. Hussein poses a threat to the United States and its interests by possibly supporting future terrorist attacks against Americans, according to Bush.

"The United States of America has the sovereign right to use force in assuring its own national security," said Bush.

"That duty falls to me as commander in chief by the oath I have sworn, by the oath I will keep. Recognizing the threat to our country, the United States Congress voted overwhelmingly last year to support the use of force against Iraq."

The United States has spent months arguing its case for war against Iraq to the United Nations.



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Saddam Hussein refused to leave Iraq.

"Last September, I went to the U.N. General Assembly and urged the nations of the world to unite and bring an end to this danger," said Bush. "On November 8th, the Security Council unanimously passed Resolution 1441,

finding Iraq in material breach of its obligations and vowing serious consequences if Iraq did not fully and immediately disarm."

The United States and Britain faced strong opposition to war by permanent U.N. Security Council members France, Russia and China who argued for further inspections and efforts at diplomacy.

"For the last four and a half months, the United States and our allies have worked with the Security Council to enforce that council's longstanding demands," said Bush.

"Yet some permanent members of the Security Council have publicly announced that they will veto any resolution that compels the disarmament of Iraq. These governments share our assessment of the danger, but not our resolve to meet it."

The United States, along with Great Britain and Spain, decided

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