

## Basketball roundup

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 7

foul line which greatly outweighed Liberty's three for three.

The men's team continued the doubleheader against Campbell University and met the tough standard for home court play established by the women's victory. Campbell is a high scoring team, averaging 76 points per game before this matchup led by the sixth highest scorer nationwide, guard Chris Clemmons. Coach McDevitt said in order to win, the Bulldogs had to lock down Clemmons and forward Shane Whitfield.

"They're all conference players and if you don't keep track of where they are with the ball, they can start scoring in bunches," McDevitt said.

The Bulldogs controlled the game from start to finish, never losing the lead after junior guard Kevin Vannatta put the home team up 7-4 with his first three pointer.

The Bulldogs dominated the Camels in intensity. For starters, the Bulldogs scored 20 points off of turnovers, Campbell scored four off of turnovers. Defensively, the Bulldogs outclassed the Camels, holding the usually high scoring team to 56 and Clemons to 10.

UNCA junior guard Ahmad Thomas led the team's offense with his dominance down low scoring 26 points. However, Vannatta was the catalyst of intensity for the Bulldogs in this matchup.

After being fouled early in the first period, a foul for which the perpetrator received a technical, Vannatta turned Kimmel Arena's intensity dial up. After sinking two of his three free throws, Vannatta began to play as if he had a personal vendetta to settle with the Campbell gentlemen. Coach McDevitt said Vannatta is the energy and effort leader of the team.

"He's for sure our go-to guy. He's team captain, brings it every day, he's an energy guy and one of those guys you like to have on your team," McDevitt said.

The captain led his troops from the front line, playing 37 of the game's 40 minutes, more than anyone else. Vannatta scored 13, had nine rebounds and five assists. The stats don't do his performance justice though.

Vannatta's big plays came at key moments to propel the team forward. For example, with seven minutes left in the first half, Vannatta stole the ball and dished it to Thomas who slammed it on the fast break which ignited the team and the crowd for the remainder of the half. The Bulldogs defeated the Camels 72-56. Coach McDevitt said the Bulldog's defense was a highlight of their play that game.

"I was happy with our defense. We did a good job with shutting down their top scorers tonight," McDevitt said. "Because of that we were able to hold Campbell who averages about 75 points a game to 56."

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62 (W) UNCA BULLDOGS  
64 V. RADFORD HIGHLANDERS  
80 (M) UNCA BULLDOGS  
69 V. RADFORD HIGHLANDERS

This past weekend's doubleheader began with the men's Big South Conference matchup against Radford University and the Bulldogs demonstrated once again why they are sitting at the top spot in the Big South along with Winthrop and Liberty.

In a classic, exciting team effort, the Bulldogs defeated Radford 80-69 with five players in double figure points.

Senior forward Giacomo Zilli, returning from injury, played phenomenal post-up basketball scoring 11 and tallying three blocks. Freshman guard Macio Teague also found his way to double figure points with 13 and senior guard David Robertson's impeccable shooting got him there as well, making two for three from behind the ark and five for six from the foul line.

Thomas and Vannatta once again led the "dogs" pursuit to victory. Vannatta stayed on the court the longest, leading by example and scoring 16 points. Thomas completed a double double with 19 points and 13 rebounds. McDevitt said the team scored so proficiently because they stuck to their principle.

"We talk a lot about controlling what we can control and on the offensive

end that's being unselfish and sharing the basketball," McDevitt said. "Sharing the ball, ball movement and body movement made our offense click. That's why we wound up with five guys in double figures and anytime you do that you're awfully difficult to defend."

Ahmad Thomas said the Bulldogs emphasize scoring down low and they executed that game plan well.

"We just moved the ball and did what we do, paint touches," Thomas said. "It's something we preached all week, move the ball, get a lot of crosses and get in the paint."

Midway through the first half, Radford orchestrated a slight comeback. The slip began with eight minutes left in the first half when the Bulldogs had a 29 to 13 lead. Once Asheville reached 29, Radford took a timeout and the home team went temporarily cold.

When play resumed the Bulldogs ended up on the wrong end of a ten point swing. The Bulldogs fortunately recovered and the halftime score was 39 to 31. McDevitt said the team needs to keep its focus and not allow comebacks from big leads.

"We relaxed a little bit then, we were playing like we were up 16. Obviously we were up 16 but when you play like that the other team takes advantage of you relaxing," McDevitt said. "We were like that for about three or four minutes. And a good team like Radford can do a lot in that amount of time."

The Bulldogs allowed 38 more to Radford in the second half but fortunately that was allowable because UNCA's Bulldogs put up an impressive 41. With the dominant win, the Bulldogs elevated themselves back into first place in the Big South Conference.

The rule of best for last applied to these four games in an unconventional sense. Although it was the one loss of the three games, the women's contest against the Big South's top ranked Radford this past Saturday was the most competitive and exciting matchup of the four.

Kirkpatrick said facing off against a much larger Radford, the Bulldogs were fighting for their points from the start while Radford's baskets were more easily won.

"We let them get some easy buckets," Kirkpatrick said. "We were having to work for all of ours for the majority of the game and we gave them some easy layups."

UNCA fought hard in the first quarter and led for most of it, though it ended at 17 all. But, Radford's size was exemplified in the second quarter as they were able to limit the Bulldogs to only seven points and score 16 more of their own.

However, the Bulldogs toughness showed in the second half behind senior guard Chatori Major. Major scored 11 in the third quarter, lighting up the court with three from behind the ark. Major's points helped the Bulldogs come within five at the end of the third.

The game still felt like an uphill battle in the fourth for the Bulldogs. They continued to grind for points while Radford scored just enough to stay ahead rather easily. The Bulldogs were aflame with intensity though, fueled by the crowd (especially their predecessors cheering them on from courtside) and even though chipping away at the deficit was slow work, they worked it down behind bad-ass paint play by senior center KJ Weaver.

Weaver showed up in the fourth quarter big time and demonstrated what a senior can bring in terms of toughness. She took a page out of the Radford book and employed her size, scoring eight points, playing tight defense and earning a great block to send the game into overtime.

The arena was in an uproar after the unforeseen comeback. The Bulldogs went behind in overtime but were able to bring it within two and get the ball back with 12 seconds left.

The unfortunate result of the game was a two point, 64-62 loss for the Bulldogs after a travel was called on Major on their final possession and the ball was turned over, but the toughness of the Bulldogs to hang with the number one team in the conference through a long, brutal game showed the validity of Kirkpatrick's assessment.