

Women's basketball defeats Campbell Camels

SAMUEL ROBINSON
Sports Staff Writer
srobins8@unca.edu

UNC Asheville women's basketball defeated a talented Campbell University team 38-33 thanks to an inspired defensive performance. It was the first time since 2005, when the Bulldogs held Radford to 32 points in the Big South Conference Tournament, that UNCA held an opponent to under 35 points.

"That was a defensive battle. Campbell came into this game third in the nation in field goal percentage defense, and last year they finished first" said Brenda Mock Kirkpatrick, head coach. "This is one of the best defensive performances that I've seen since I've coached here."

Campbell arrived at Kimmel Arena last Tuesday averaging 58 points per game. Summer Price, a junior guard for the Fighting Camels, leads the Big South in points per game, averaging 15.3.

"You have to key on Summer Price. I think she scored six of her 14 in the fourth quarter," Mock said. "We tried to keep the ball out of her hands as best we could."

Mock's physical gameplan worked as Price was held below her season average and no other Campbell player scored more than seven points.

Due to the physical nature of the game, early fouls against senior center Bronza Fitzgerald and junior guard Ali Trani forced the Bulldogs to their bench early. Freshman guards Nadiria Evans and Amaryah Corpening proved adequate replacements, scoring six of the Bulldog's seven points in the first quarter.

With Fitzgerald on the bench, UNCA conceded a significant size advantage to Campbell. In addition to providing points off the bench, the personnel change allowed the Bulldogs to run a more aggressive defensive scheme, perhaps to counteract Campbell's size advantage.

"I thought they were a little bit rattled when we ran our press,"



PHOTO BY SAMUEL ROBINSON

Forward Tiffany Wilson assists her UNC Asheville Bulldogs to win against the Campbell Camels, improving the Bulldog's conference record to 11-4.

Mock said. "We had to go to that because we couldn't generate any half court-offense. We didn't capitalize on every one of their turnovers, but we did get them a little off balance."

The Bulldogs entered halftime trailing 18-15 after struggling to establish much offensive rhythm.

"We missed some good early chances that may have translated to some missed chances later on. We didn't find the bigs inside as much and struggled from the free throw line, usually we do a better job of that," said Joe Lacasto, junior health and wellness student.

Despite struggling to find the ball and not registering a single point in the first, Fitzgerald came alive in the second half. She finished with 12 points.

Senior guard Khaila Webb hit a big 3-pointer with four minutes remaining in the third quarter to

bring the Bulldogs within three. On the following possession, the Bulldog's smothering defense forced an errant resulting in a Fitzgerald interception. The senior center drove the ball the length of the court and converted a layup to make the score 23-24.

UNCA began the fourth quarter trailing the Fighting Camels 27-25.

"The teams competed well on offense and defense. It was a battle, a real grind-it-out game tonight," said MaCio Teague, a sophomore guard on the UNCA men's basketball team. "We missed some free throws late. But other than that, the women competed very well and came out with the win late in the season — that's what is important."

Despite struggling from the free throw line all night, the Bulldogs hit six of their 17 free throw attempts in the fourth quarter and outscored Campbell 13-6 in the final period of

play.

"We left a lot of points at the free throw line, going nine for 28," Mock said. "Getting the 28 attempts is great. That means we're aggressive, we're attacking the basket and playing physical basketball. But we've got to be able to convert there."

The win improves the Bulldogs conference record to 11-4.

The Bulldogs remain in contention for a conference championship, though it would require them winning their remaining games and Liberty losing their final three games.

UNCA will be looking to win their third Big South Conference Championship in a row this post-season, and if the past conference tournaments serve as any indication, it will take determined, gritty performances such as this in order to do so.