

# SPORTS

## Eagles Lose Close Game To Columbus State University

NCCU Sports Information Department

COLUMBUS, Ga. — Columbus State trailed by 15 points on a pair of occasions in the first half here Dec. 27 before using a furious second-half rally to squeak past North Carolina Central 90-89 in the opening game of the CSU Holiday Basketball Bonanza. CSU moves to 6-2 on the season, while the Eagles fall to 5-2.

CSU guards Yandel Brown and Kendrick Jones fueled the second-half rally, scoring 17 and 16 points respectively over the final 20 minutes. Brown, who entered the contest averaging over 32 points per game, exploded for 14 points over a span of 1:47 which included three long three-point buckets.

His second trey tied the score at 63 with 12:25 left his layup at the 11:51 mark gave the Cougars their first lead of the game. Jones also contributed a triple to give CSU its biggest lead at 73-67 with 9:16 to play.

The Eagles clawed their way right back into the game and tied the score at 75 on a Curtis Knight three-pointer with 7:08 left. CSU would regain the lead on a Chris Jackson jumper in the paint and would hold it until a pair of Knight free-throws with 1:40 left gave NCCU an 85-84 lead.

There were four lead changes before the Cougars found themselves with the ball trailing 89-88 with under 30 seconds to play. Jones drove the lane and had his shot blocked into the hands of Jackson. Jackson's put-back was off and Jones' tip-in attempt popped right back to him and he made the second put-back count to give CSU a 90-89 lead with 16.7 seconds left.

The Eagles had two attempts at a winning shot in the final seconds. A Chris Tyrance jumper resulted in a stuff by CSU forward Nate Patterson and a jump-ball call. The Eagles retained possession with 2.5 seconds left and center Jason Hervey was forced to put up a three-pointer. His shot was off but rebounded by Knight whose desperation shot was off the mark as the horn sounded.

The loss put a damper on a phenomenal night by Knight and Jonathan Moore. The duo combined for 54 points on 20-32 shooting. Knight's 28-point total included six treys, while Moore collected 26 points to go with a game-high 14 rebounds, three assists, and four blocked shots. Hervey added 12 points.

Brown led all scorers with 30 points for CSU. He was followed by Jones with 27 and 13 points each from Akeem Francis and Chris Jackson. Jackson led the Cougars in rebounding with seven after coming off the bench to play 23 minutes. His rebounding total included five offensive boards. CSU shot 51 percent in the second half to offset a 64.5 percent first-half effort from the Eagles.

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## Brawls and all, NBA still a gold mine

By Steve Wilstein

America's poorest big city at least can boast one of the nation's most highly valued NBA teams.

That says more than a little about the country, how wealth and poverty live side by side, and how much people are willing to pay for entertainment.

The Cleveland Cavaliers sold for \$375 million Monday, passing from Gordon Gund to a group led by 42-year-old on-line mortgage zillionaire Dan Gilbert, who dreamed of owning a sports team since he was a kid.

Lots of kids have had the same dream. Gilbert had the brains and boldness to make it happen.

Those passions and traits once landed Gilbert in trouble and could yet threaten the deal, which needs approval by at least 23 of the league's 30 owners.

According to a story in the Lansing State Journal, Gilbert was arrested with three other students in 1981 on charges of operating a bookmaking ring at Michigan State that handled \$114,000 in bets on football and basketball games.

Accused of conspiring to violate state gambling laws, Gilbert was fined, given three years' probation and ordered to do 100 hours of community service, the paper said. The felony was dropped after he completed the sentences.

Gilbert's transgression didn't stop him from being admitted to the Michigan state bar to practice law or from sitting on the board of a savings and loan. If nothing worse turns up, it shouldn't stop him from taking control of the Cavs.

## Local Tennis Pro Ivan Harrell Earns PTR Rating

HILTON HEAD ISLAND, S.C. — Ivan K. Harrell of Durham has been certified by Professional Tennis Registry, the world's largest international organization of tennis teachers and coaches.

A comprehensive five-part examination is used to determine each member's rating. The written and on-court examination was administered by PTR on teaching and playing skills to determine a certification rating. Coach Harrell received the Professional rating.

Celebrating 25 years of setting the standard for tennis teaching excellence, PTR is the world's largest international tennis teaching organization with more than 10,300 members in 120 countries. It has the greatest percentage of minority and women members of any such organization. PTR is dedicated to educating, certifying and servicing tennis teachers and coaches worldwide.

Gilbert's indulgence is Cleveland's good fortune, since the Detroit businessman said he plans to keep the Cavs right where they are and "right where they belong."

Cleveland can use all the help it can get these days. Its 31.3 percent poverty rate in 2003 was worse than Newark, N.J., Detroit, Fresno, Calif., and Miami among the top five impoverished big cities ranked by the U.S. Census Bureau last August.

Cleveland recently had to lay off hundreds of police officers and firefighters. It had to cut back on trash pickups and other city services. Hundreds of teachers lost their jobs.

Yet all that poverty and all those job losses haven't stopped the Cavaliers from drawing some of the NBA's largest crowds - an average of 18,669 through 14 games this year. They averaged 18,522 last season, up from 13,792 the year before.

The arena is downtown, not far from neighborhoods with boarded up homes and abandoned storefronts, but the fans stream in from the richer suburbs and entire Lake Erie region.

Two words explain why they come and why the franchise is worth so much: LeBron James.

The Rookie of the Year last season and an MVP candidate this season, the 20-year-old James is the NBA's most popular, most exciting and best young player.

He is at the heart of the Cavs' surge from a 17-game winner two years ago to first place in the Central Division now - just ahead of the defending champion Detroit Pistons - with 18 wins already this season.

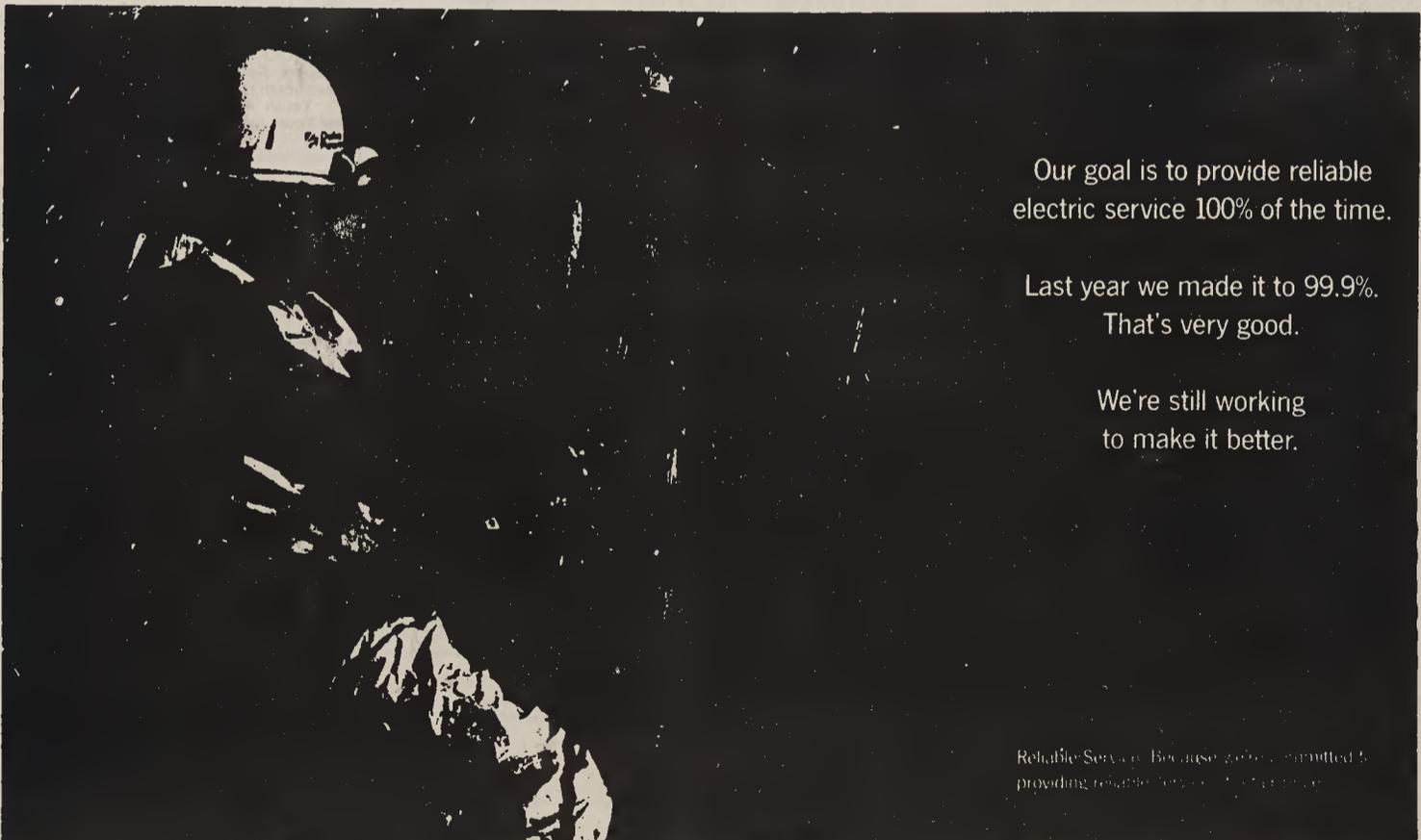
If the Cavs had not won the lottery and drafted James out of high school, the franchise would have been worth \$100 million less, said Cleveland State sports economist Mark Rosentraub.

"Sometimes the ball bounces your way," Rosentraub said, adding that the \$375 million is "a fair price" for the Cavs, given the players under contract, their commitment to stay, the quality of the arena and the size of the market.

The price tag for the franchise and operational control of the 20,000-seat Gund Arena is close to the \$401 million paid for the Phoenix Suns and far higher than the cost of the Atlanta Hawks (\$250 million) and New Jersey Nets (\$300 million) in the past year's other NBA sales.

As crazy as NBA salaries seem, and as ugly as this season has been so far with the brawl in Detroit, the sale of the Cavs also suggests that the league is still booming.

"It shows you what America wants to buy," Rosentraub said. "The values wouldn't go up if the owners couldn't make money on it. Nobody's losing money here. Sports franchises are still a coveted asset among the wealthy."



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