

BLACK COLLEGE SPORTS PAGE

ABRUPT END TO HOOPS SEASON

SHORT POSTSEASON FOR CHAMPS, TOP TEAMS IN CIAA, MEAC, SIAC AND SWAC



Oscar Daniel Photo

WOODY: Big man key to Benedict's run to SIAC title and Region finals.

TOURNEY RECAPS

MEN

NCAA DIV. II SOUTH REGION - FINALS

North Alabama 97, Benedict 75

SIAC champion **Benedict** raced out to a 41-35 halftime lead only to watch North Alabama put on a torrid shooting display, canning 70% from the field (21-of-30) including 8-of-10 from behind the arc, to outscore the Tigers 62-34 in the second half of the championship game at the NCAA Div. II South Regional in Lakeland, Fla., Tuesday.

Thomas Frase was nearly unstoppable inside totalling 30 points, 25 in the second half, while Quinn Beckwith led the Lions' (27-8) outside attack with five 3s and 16 points. Beckwith snatched 10 rebounds while Casey Holt added 12 points and 11 boards.

Benedict (28-5) was led by freshman **Michael Holmes'** 20 points and 10 boards while **Charles Gibbs** chipped in 19 and **Darius Lane** 13. The Tigers hit on only 11-of-29 in the second half including 1-of-8 from 3-point range.

NCAA DIV. I - PLAY-IN

Mount Saint Mary's 69, Coppin State 60

After trailing 34-33 at the half, Mount Saint Mary's (19-14) held **Coppin State** scoreless for a five-minute stretch late in the second half to pull away to victory over the Eagles in the opening round game in Dayton of the NCAA Tournament Tuesday.

The cold stretch for the Eagles (16-21) coincided with a hot stretch of the Mountaineers (19-14), who enjoyed a huge advantage at the free throw line, making 26 of 32 while CSU canned just 6 of 13. Senior guard **Tywain McKee**, the hero and MVP of the Eagles' MEAC Tournament run, made just 6 of 17 shots and finished with a team-high 15 points. Fellow seniors **Antwan Harrison** (14) and **Mike Miller** (11) also scored in double figures.

NCAA DIV. I - FIRST ROUND

UCLA 70, Miss. Valley State 29

The Delta Devils (17-16) set a record for futility in an NCAA tournament first-round game in the loss to West Region top-seed UCLA (32-3). Their 13-for-66 night from the field was the worst shooting performance (19.7%) in an NCAA tournament game since 1985, and their 29 points were the fewest in the tournament since 1946.

Larry Cox Jr. had eight points and seven rebounds to lead the Delta Devils.

NIT - FIRST ROUND

Virginia Tech 94, Morgan State 62

Virginia Tech hit 19 of 23 (82.6%) second-half shots to pull away from **Morgan State** in a first round NIT game played on the Hokies' home court in Blacksburg, Va Wednesday. A.D. Vasallo scored a game-high 27 points on 11-of-14 shooting and led the Hokies (20-13) attack. **Maquise Kately** led the Bears (22-11) with 21 points while **Boubacar Coly** had 11 points and 6 rebounds. Scoring leader and MEAC Player of the Year **Jamar Smith**, still not a full strength with a foot injury, could play only 18 minutes and contributed six points.

NIT - FIRST ROUND

Arizona State 64, Alabama State 53

Alabama State dug itself a huge hole, making just one of its first 17 shots, but fought back to hang with Arizona State before falling on the Sun Devils' home court in Tempe Tuesday. The Hornets (20-11) trailed 39-21 at the half, but fought back to get within 11 at 47-36 but could never cut the lead below ten.

Andrew Hayles (12) and **Brandon Brooks** (10) scored in double figures for the Hornets. James Harden's 25 led Arizona State (20-12).

WOMEN

NCAA DIV. I - FIRST ROUND

Maryland 80, Coppin State 66

Rashida Suber scored 25 points and **Shalamar Oakley** had 20 as MEAC champ **Coppin State** (22-12) hung with Maryland before falling to the Spokane Region's top seed on its home floor.

Coppin State led 20-15 early, trailed by only five at halftime and by just 45-41 with 17 minutes left. But Maryland staged 10-0 and 11-1 second-half runs to pull away.

"They did a tremendous job in terms of their scouting. I thought they were very physical and very aggressive, and did a tremendous job for 40 minutes," Terps coach Brenda Frese said. "They really made us work." Crystal Langhorne had 25 points and 12 rebounds, Marissa Coleman scored 17 and Laura Harper had 14 for the Terrapins (31-3).

The Lady Eagles had more field goals (27-24) and fewer turnovers (16-15) but were victimized by a 28-10 deficit at the free throw line and a 42-28 rebounding edge.

"We just fell a little short," Coppin coach **Derek Brown** said.

NCAA DIV. I - FIRST ROUND

LSU 66, Jackson State 32

Jackson State could manage only the third fewest points in an NCAA tournament game in falling to New Orleans Region second-seed LSU. The Lady Tigers (18-14) shot just 23 percent from the field and is now 0-4 in NCAA appearances.

Gabrielle Jones led JSU with seven points. Sylvia Fowles had 16 to lead LSU (28-5).

WNIT - FIRST ROUND

Texas State 84, Prairie View 83

Texas State's Joyce Edworomadu canned a 3-pointer with 1.4 seconds to go give the Bobcats (20-11) a heartbreaking decision over **Prairie View** in a first round WNIT game.

The clutch game-winner overshadowed a career-high 40-point outburst by the Lady Panthers' **Candice Thomas**, the SWAC player of the year. Thomas converted 13 of 21 field goal attempts including 2 of 3 from behind the arc and hit on 12 of 16 free throws.

Prairie View (22-12) led 45-34 at the half and was still ahead 82-76 with 43 seconds left. After a Edworomadu 3, Prairie View's **Shavonne Smith** missed two free throws. After a Texas State basket and a free throw by Thomas with 10 seconds left, Edworomadu canned her game-winner.

Three other Lady Panthers scored in double figures with **Dominique Smith** getting 13, Smith with 12 and **Twila Stokes** getting 10 points and 10 rebounds.

WNIT - FIRST ROUND

South Carolina 102, NC A&T 74

North Carolina A&T stayed with South Carolina for nearly an entire half before the Gamecocks pulled away in the second half for the first-round WNIT win.

The Lady Aggies led 14-6 early and trailed only 41-38 2:15 before halftime. But the Gamecocks scored the last seven points of the half and opened the second half on a 10-0 to effectively put the game away.

Amber Bland led the Lady Aggies (25-8) with 18 points and **Brittanie Taylor-James** added 16 points and six boards. Jordan Jones had a WNIT-record nine 3-pointers and finished with 31 points for USC (16-15). Backcourt mate Brianna Dickerson added 25 points.

FINAL BCSP TOP TEN (MEN'S AND WOMEN'S BASKETBALL)

- BENEDICT** (28-5) - Fred Watson's Tigers went farther than any, winning SIAC regular season and tourney titles, before bowing in Div. II South Region finals, one game short of Elite Eight.
- MORGAN STATE** (22-11) - MEAC regular season champ hampered by loss of league POY Jamar Smith in losing in tourney finals and first round of NIT.
- ALABAMA STATE** (20-11) - SWAC regular season titleist bowed out in tourney semis, first round of NIT.
- VIRGINIA UNION** (22-8) - CIAA regular season champ played without one of its top scorers (Keith Blanks) in losing tourney finals and in D2 playoffs.
- COPPIN STATE** (16-21) - Struggled in regular season but caught fire late to win MEAC Tourney from 7th seed. Lost in NCAA play-in game.
- MISSISSIPPI VALLEY STATE** (17-16) - Second-seeded Devils made late season run to SWAC Tourney title. Blasted by top-seed UCLA in NCAA West Regional.
- JOHNSON C. SMITH** (21-10) - Came from fourth seed to win CIAA Tournament. Bowed in first round of Div. II playoffs.
- HAMPTON** (18-12) - MEAC second-seed lost in tourney quarterfinals to Coppin State.
- CLAFLIN** (24-2) - Best record in black college hoops including a win over top-ranked Benedict. Was 22-2 vs. SIAC this season.
- ELIZABETH CITY STATE** (20-7) - CIAA tourney's second seed fell in quarterfinals to eventual tourney runners-up, Fayetteville State.



WATSON

- PRAIRIE VIEW** (22-12) - SWAC regular season winner falls in OT to Jackson State in tourney finals. Lost on buzzer-beater to Texas State in WNIT.
- (TIE) NORTH CAROLINA A&T** (25-8) - Swept to MEAC regular season crown posting program's best record before losing heart-breaker in tourney finals. Lost to South Carolina in WNIT.
- COPPIN STATE** (22-12) - Second seed in MEAC takes tourney title, battles gamely before losing in first round to Maryland. (TIE) **JACKSON STATE** (18-14) - SWAC second seed overcame Prairie View for SWAC tourney title. Succumbed to LSU in NCAA first round.
- SHAW** (21-12) - CIAA regular season and tourney champ couldn't get out of first round of Div. II South Atlantic Region.
- (TIE) TUSKEGEE** (21-9) - SIAC regular season and tourney champs bowed out in first round of Div. II South Regional.
- JOHNSON C. SMITH** (21-10) - CIAA Tourney runners-up fell in first round of Div. II South Atlantic Region playoffs.
- (TIE) KENTUCKY STATE** (19-12) - SIAC Tourney runners-up fell in first round of Div. II South Regional.
- BOWIE STATE** (22-6) - CIAA E. Div. champs and tournament second seed lost in OT to JC Smith in tournament semifinals.
- LANGSTON** (31-2) - Winners of the (NAIA) Red River Conference regular season and tournament titles, lost in first round of NAIA nationals.



COOPER

Benedict, Prairie View, A&T top final ranking

LUT WILLIAMS
BCSP Editor

There were no deep postseason runs for black college men's basketball teams this year, but that doesn't mean there were no dominant teams. And the most dominant team also made the deepest run.

Benedict (28-5) won the SIAC regular season title by a whopping six games and followed that with a scintillating run to that league's tournament title. Then, as a second seed in the NCAA Div. II South Region, the Tigers got the SIAC's first post-tournament win in 17 years with a first round victory, and got another win to reach the Regional finals. There they bowed out just one win short of the Elite Eight national quarterfinals. No other team this season could match those accomplishments.

For their historic run, **Fred Watson's** Tigers get the nod as the top team in the 2007-08 BCSP Final Top Ten. Their place atop the BCSP ranking is also a first for an SIAC school.

Watson masterfully blended a deep and talented squad that had seven players average between 5 and 12 points per game. The Tiger attack was anchored by 6-7 big man **Martinis Woody's** 9.8 points and 10.1 rebounds per game and featured mercurial guards **Darius Lane** (9.3 ppg.) and **Charles Gibbs** (12.1 ppg.) with 6-7 junior **Bennie Lewis** (11.3 ppg.) and 6-5 freshman sensation **Michael Holmes** (10.1 ppg., 7.5 rpg.) as able finishers.

It was Watson and the Tigers third SIAC tournament title and NCAA Div. II playoff berth in five years. The best news is that all the key players return next season.

In a testament to his coaching and recruiting prowess, **Morgan State** head coach **Todd Bozeman** completed a worst-to-first turnaround for the Bears in just two short years.

MSU (22-11) clawed its way to the top of the MEAC standings win-

ning the regular season title by three games behind the play of MEAC Player of the Year **Jamar Smith** (17 ppg.) and Defensive Player of the Year **Boubacar Coly** (11.1 rpg., 2.5 bpg.). Only Smith's loss to injury likely prevented the Bears from adding the tournament crown. Without him, they battled to the tourney finals and, with the league's automatic bid to the NIT and a hobbled Smith, they took on Virginia Tech, one of the top teams snubbed by the NCAA. For their efforts, the Bears are the BCSP's second choice.

Alabama State (20-11) was perhaps just as dominant in the SWAC, taking that league's regular season crown by three games before losing in overtime in the tournament's semifinals. **Lewis Jackson's** troops went on to represent the conference well in the NIT, losing by 12 at Arizona State in the first round. The Hornets hold down the third spot.

Fourth-ranked **Virginia Union** (22-8) led the way in the CIAA regular season but faulted in the tournament finals. It also played its finals games without one of its top scorers (**Lakeith Blanks**), who was dismissed from the team just prior to the tournament. VUU went out in the first round of the Div. II South Atlantic Regional.

The teams ranked fifth thru seventh - **Coppin State** (MEAC), **Mississippi Valley State** (SWAC) and **Johnson C. Smith** (CIAA) - rose up to win their respective conference tournaments, but couldn't make hay on the national scene.

Coppin State (16-21) came the longest way, from a seventh seed to take the MEAC tourney title winning four games in five days by a total of six points and knocking off the tourney's first, second and third seeds along the way. The Eagles then had the dubious distinction of entering the NCAA Tournament with the most losses ever (20). They

fell to Mount St. Mary's in the play-in game.

MVSU (17-16) finished strong to enter the SWAC Tourney as a second seed and knocked off Jackson State in the finals. The Delta Devils flamed out (70-29) in a first round NCAA loss to UCLA.

As a fourth seed, JCSU (21-10) knocked off Virginia Union to take the CIAA tournament title before bowing out in the first round of the South Atlantic Region playoffs.

Hampton (18-12), who finished second in the MEAC regular season race, is eighth. **Claffin**, who posted a sterling 24-2 record mostly against SIAC competition, is ninth with **Elizabeth City State** (20-7), who led the CIAA for most of the regular season, tenth.

WOMEN

The women's final Top Ten was much harder to figure. In the Div. II conferences, both regular season winners - **Shaw** (CIAA) and **Tuskegee** (SIAC) - also rolled to tournament titles. On the Div. I side, neither regular season winner **North Carolina A&T** (MEAC) nor **Prairie View** (SWAC) could complete the double. And none of the four, nor any other team in the final Top Ten, got a win past its conference tournament.

But for their body of work, **Prairie View** and **NC A&T** tie for the top spot.

Both won their respective conference regular season races by two games. Against NCAA Div. I competition, **Prairie View** (22-12) had the tougher non-conference schedule which is reflected in its won-loss record. The two had three common opponents - Baylor, Texas A&M and Virginia Tech. Though **Prairie View** fared a little better than **A&T** (25-8) in the matchups, they both lost to all three.

Cynthia Cooper's **Prairie View** squad won the regular season crown but had the tables turned on them



NC A&T Sports Photo

CAGE-BIBBS: Her Lady Aggies posted a best-ever 25-8 mark winning the MEAC regular season title and falling just short in the tournament finals. Their WNIT berth was the program's first postseason appearance in 14 years.

in the SWAC tournament finals by second-seeded **Jackson State** (18-14), just as **Prairie View** had done to JSU a season ago. After winning the regular season title with a 15-1 mark, **Patricia Cage-Bibbs** A&T Lady Aggies were felled in the MEAC tournament finals by **Coppin State** (22-12), also a second seed. Both PV and NC A&T lost subsequent WNIT games while **Coppin State** and JSU did the same in the NCAA Tournament. CSU and JSU are tied for third.

Shaw (21-12) and **Tuskegee** (21-9) both suffered similar fates beyond their tournament titles, losing first round NCAA Div. II playoff games. They are tied at No. 5.

Tournament runners-up who lost in the D2 first round, **Johnson C. Smith** (21-10) and **Kentucky State** (19-12) hold down the next two spots (7th and 8th). CIAA second-seed **Bowie State** (22-6) and NAIA Red River champ **Langston** (31-2) get the final places.

BCSP Notes

Holt resigns at UAPB

Arkansas-Pine Bluff head basketball coach **Van Holt** has resigned, saying he had "anticipated better results" but will continue to support the school. The school announced last Tuesday that Holt offered his immediate resignation Monday and the school accepted.

"It has been a labor of love for me and I believe much has been accomplished," Holt said in his resignation letter. "I take great pride in the improvements in the program and had anticipated better results and a brighter future. I will continue to be a supporter of UAPB."

Holt is 50-124 overall and 35-73 in **Southwestern Athletic Conference** games in his six years at the university. He won a season-best 13 games twice - in 2005-06 and 2007-08 - and led the Golden Lions to a 9-9 conference best mark during the 2006-07 season.

Recently, Holt led the Golden Lions (13-18, 8-10 SWAC) to their third consecutive SWAC tournament. UAPB was eliminated in the semifinals by eventual tournament champion **Mississippi Valley State**. UAPB's best run was in 2006, when the Golden Lions advanced to the championship game before losing to Southern 57-44.

"Van Holt is a class individual," UAPB Athletic Director **Louis "Skip" Perkins** said. "Accepting his resignation was difficult, but we are extremely grateful for all the hard work and time coach Holt has put in here."

Perkins said a search for Holt's replacement will begin immediately.

SWAC hoops honorees

The **Southwestern Athletic Conference**

announced its men's basketball all-conference honors for the 2007-2008 season. In a poll conducted by the conference office in which votes were received from the league's head coaches and sports information directors, **Alabama State** guard **Andrew Hayles** was named SWAC men's Player of the Year while **Alabama A&M** center **Mickell Gladness** was tabbed the conference's Defensive Player of the Year.

For the women, **Prairie View** guard **Candice Thomas** was chosen as player of the year with **Jackson State** forward **Carena Easley** as the top defender.

Hayles, a 6-foot-5, 190-pound, junior from Mobile, was a key component in the Hornets' run to a regular-season title. In 28 games, he averaged 14.8 points, 3.8 rebounds, 1.8 assists and 1.2 steals per game. He was fifth in the league in scoring, eighth in field goal percentage (45.2%), fifth in free throw shooting (75.0%) and third in 3-point shooting (39.1%).

Gladness was named the defensive player of the year selection for the second consecutive season. A 6-foot-11, 205-pound, senior from Sylacauga, Alabama, he led the conference and was second in the nation in blocks averaging 4.6 blocked shots per game.

Southern forward **Barry Honore'** is the 2008 SWAC Freshman of the Year. In 29 games, the 6-foot-7, 230-pound Honore' averaged 8.5 points and 5.0 rebounds per game.

FIRST TEAM
Andrew Hayles, 6-5, Jr., G, Alabama State; Trant Sampson, 5-10, So., G, Alabama A&M; Mickell Gladness, 6-11, Sr., C, Alabama A&M; William Byrd, 6-7, Sr., F, Arkansas-Pine Bluff; Grant Maxey, 6-7, So., F, Jackson State
SECOND TEAM
Brandon Brooks, 6-2, Jr., G, Alabama State; Chris Davis, 6-2, Jr., G, Southern; Larry Cox, 6-10, Sr., C, Miss. Valley State; Carl Lucas, 6-5, Sr., F, Miss. Valley State; Anthony Williams, 6-7, Sr., F, Grambling State

Thomas, (5'9, So., G, Waco, Texas) was also named Most Valuable Player in the 2007 SWAC Tournament, after leading her team to their first SWAC tournament title ever. She ranked second in the conference in scoring (15.2 ppg.) and field-goal percentage. (52.8). She was also fourth in the conference in steals (2.3 spg.) and fifth in assists (3.17 apg.)

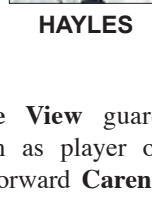
Easley led the SWAC and was eighth in the nation with 3.43 steals per game. She was also fifth in the SWAC in field-goal percentage (44.3) and fourth in minutes played (32.43 per game).

Chari Smith of **Prairie View** was picked as the conference's newcomer of the year with **Freda Allen** of Southern as selected as freshman of the Year.

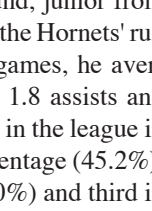
FIRST TEAM
LaSharee Christian, 5-6, Sr., G, Jackson State; Candice Thomas, 5-9, So., G, Prairie View; Shawntawnee Collins, 6-1, Sr., F, Alcorn State; Gaati Werema, 6-0, So., F, Prairie View; Chari Smith, 6-3, Jr., C, Prairie View
SECOND TEAM
Shantae Robinson, 5-2, Sr., G, Alabama State; Delores Hughley, 5-6, Sr., G, Arkansas-Pine Bluff; Portia Wilson, 5-10, Sr., F, Miss. Valley State; Freda Allen, 6-1, Fr., F, Southern; Felecia Drummond, 5-11, Sr., C, Alabama A&M



HAYLES



THOMAS



GLADNESS