
Season ends with gut-wrenching overtime loss at DII Regional

Contributed by Antoine Bell
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Photo Courtesy of Arkansas Tech Sports Information

Russellville, Ark. - If the last second loss in the Gulf South Conference championship game was painful, Saturday will go down as undescrivable heartbreak as the Chargers had their season come to an end with a 59-57 overtime loss to No. 11 Rollins College. With the loss, the 2009-10 campaign ended with an all-time UAH Division II record of 23-7.

The Chargers were led by freshman standouts Jaime Smith and Zane Campbell who tallied 16 and 13 points respectively. Smith was 6-for-14 from the field, including four 3-pointers. Campbell was 5-for-10 from the field and had half of the Chargers' freethrows at 3-for-4. He also had six rebounds.

Not to be overlooked, sophomore guard Josh Magette had a solid stat line, finishing with eight points, 10 assists, seven rebounds and six steals.

Ryna Ferranti led Rollins with 13 points. Nick Wolf added 12 points and 11 rebounds while Myk Brown contributed 10.

"It was a classic college basketball game between two great teams," said UAH coach Lennie Acuff. "I couldn't be more proud of these kids and the season they've had."

The game didn't start out a classic. In fact, it was all UAH all the time in the first ten minutes. The Chargers came out firing rolling out to a 17-point lead. When Magette buried a deep 3-pointer with 10:05 left, the Chargers had a seemingly commanding 25-8 lead. However, UAH went cold over the final 10 minutes, managing only two points, while Rollins closed out the half with an 18-2 run to close to within a point at 27-26.

The Tars quickly jumped ahead early in the second half with a 3-pointer by Julian Wilkison. From there it was a dogfight with the teams exchanging leads and the score being tied six times.

Rollins appeared to be pulling away after Ferranti dropped in a jumper with 3:12 left to give the Tars a 51-45 lead. Then, the Chargers turned the ball over on the next possession, giving Rollins a chance to virtually put the nail in the coffin.

However after a Rollins turnover, the Chargers cut the lead in half with a 3-pointer by Smith with 2:15 left. Then, another turnover put the ball back the Chargers' hands with less than two minutes left. Senior guard Derek Johnston was fouled and made a pair of freethrows to make it 51-50 with 1:44 left.

Thirty seconds later, Brown missed a jumper and Campbell grabbed the rebound. On the next UAH possession, Magette found Johnston alone in the corner and he knocked down the 3-pointer to give the Chargers a 53-51 lead with 39 seconds left.

After a timeout, Rollins tied the game on a layup by Ian Scott with 16 seconds left. The Chargers had a chance to win the game, but Campbell's jumper from the corner came up short, sending the game into overtime.

In the extra period, Rollins drew blood first on a jumper by Brown. Smith answered on the other end with a 3-pointer, giving UAH a 56-55 lead with 3:11 left. After a layup by Ferranti put Rollins back on top, Tyler Hanback split a pair of freethrows to tie the game at 57-all with 2:17 left.

Ferranti scored again with 2:05 left to put the Tars on top for good. The Chargers had several chances to reclaim the lead and possibly pull off the upset. Smith missed a jumper in traffic with 13 seconds left. Then after Matt Robertson missed the front end of a one-and-one for the Tars, Johnston had a great look from downtown, but was long with three seconds left.

UAH had one last gasp of hope when Wolf came up short on another one-and-one first shot with less than a second left. The Chargers had one more chance with .2 left for a tip at the basket. Magette lobbed a pass nearly the length of the court towards the UAH goal. Hanback elevated, caught the ball in flight and fired in the same motion as the horn sounded. Unfortunately, his short shot nipped the corner of the glass and fell harmlessly to the floor.

The Chargers lose two seniors, Johnston and Cody Jones. A solid nucleus returns for the 2010-11 season and Campbell is excited about making another run at the postseason. "I'm disappointed that things didn't work out for us this year, but I'm excited about playing with Jaime (Smith), Josh (Magette), X (Xavier Baldwin), Tyler (Hanback) and the rest of the guys," he said.