SWAC WOMEN'S TOURNAMENT

Unlikely Jackson State surges to take title

At best, Jackson State's Tigerettes were long shots to reach the tournament finals, much less win the whole thing.

But in the waning moments, JSU did just that when Andrea Johnson sank two free throws to give them a 60-58 comeback triumph over Alcorn State in the SWAC women's tournament in Houston.

Michelle Houston led the offense for Jackson with 20 points, which was high for the game. Patricia Figgers contributed 15 and Johnson chipped in with 10 points.

Coach Andrew Pennington's team looked like anything but a legitimate contender at the end of the regular season. JSU finished fourth in the team standings, played .500 ball overall (14-14) and had a losing league record (6-8). And on top of that, they lost four of their final six games going into the tournament.

Obviously, Jackson State saved the best for last. After defeating Mississippi Valley State in the opening round, the feeling on the team was that JSU had more of a chance to win that even the most optimistic of followers would dare to dream.

JSU's late surge caught Alcorn State (17-12) off guard. By the time coach Shirley Walker's crew realized what was happening, it was too late. The Lady Braves' problems started with five minutes left in the contest. At that point they led, 55-45.

But Houston came to the rescue with a couple of three-pointers to bring Jackson to within one point of the lead at 58-57. She then tied the game at 58-all by hitting a foul shot with 16 seconds left, setting the scene for Johnson's late game heroics.

Alcorn, the No. 2 seed, got 17 points from Sherlanda Lewis, tournament MVP. Lisa Powell followed up with 12 points and Tami Vernado added 10.

Winning the conference tournament had to be an especially euphoric feeling for first-year coach Pennington. In the pre-season polls, his team was picked to finish last. Given that prediction, the coach's main aim was to keep his team from finishing in the cellar.

Jackson's primary asset all season long was their defense. They led the conference in scoring defense and field goal defense (65 ppg and 39.4 percent respectively).

Individually, Houston was the big gun with 17.6 ppg, fourth best in the league. Patricia Grant was the prime rebounder at 8.7 a game and a lethal long distance shooter -- second in SWAC in three-point field goal percentage (.362), third in the conference in three-point goals made per game (2.0).

Yes, it was a long, hard climb for the underdog Tigerettes. But in the end, they rode the crest of proficiency at the right time of the year.

- Roger Gilbertson

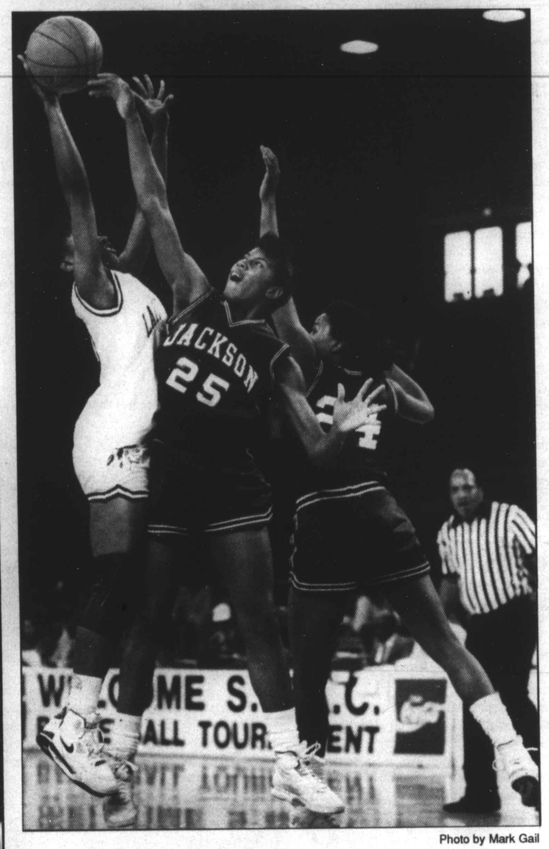

Photo by Mark Gail

JSU's Patricia Grant (25) partially blocks a shot by Alcorn's Tami Varnado as teammate Pamela Reed (24) helps out.

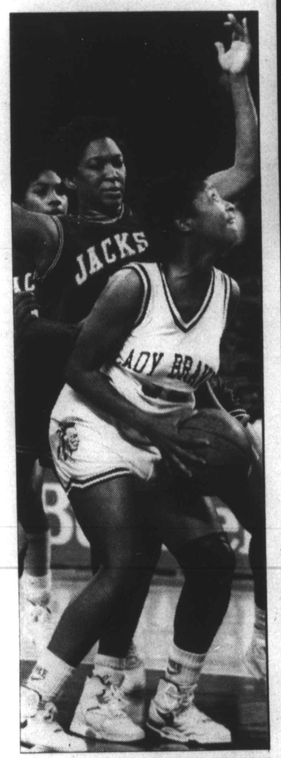

Photo by Mark Gail

SWAC tournament MVP Sherlanda Lewis looks for an opening as Jackson State's Deborah Parris defends.

SWAC Women's All-Tournament Team

Player	Height/Position	School
Michelle Houston	5-8 Guard	Jackson State
Sonja Dixon	5-9 Forward	Texas Southern
Sherlanda Lewis	5-9 Forward	Alcorn State
Tami Varnado	5-9 Guard/Forward	Alcorn State
Tonya Steele	4-11 Guard	Alcorn State

Tournament MVP
Sherlanda Lewis

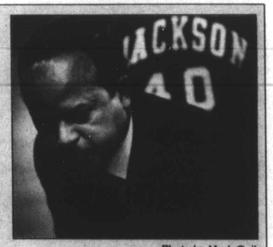

Photo by Mark Gail

Tigerettes' coach Andrew Pennington had a feeling his ladies would do well after their opening round win over Mississippi Valley State.

SIAC MEN'S TOURNAMENT

Maroon Tigers topple Albany St. Rams

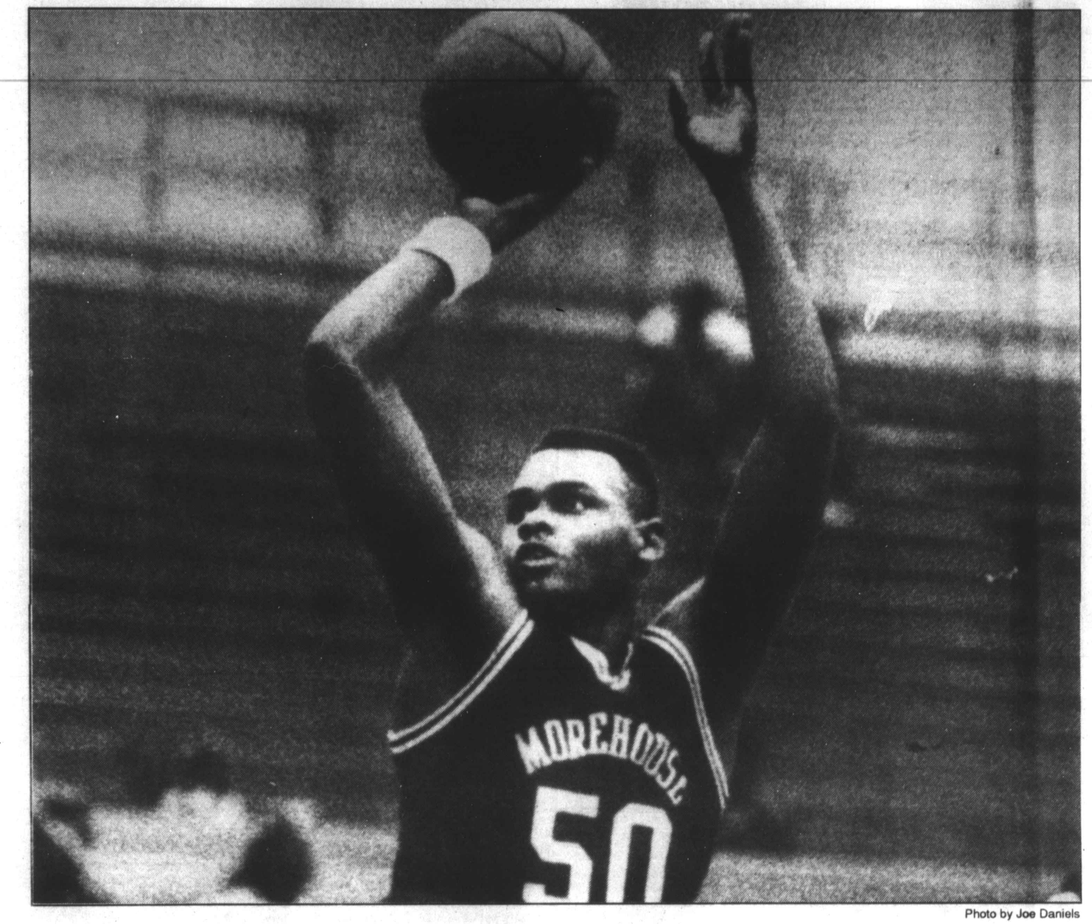

Photo by Joe Daniels

Morehouse pivotman Stewart Watkins burned Albany State for 17 points in the SIAC finals.

Morehouse's Maroon Tigers did what they had to do in capturing the SIAC men's tournament with a 67-60 decision over Albany State in Huntsville, Ala.

Point guard James Walker provided the final touches in the closing moments to ensure his team's triumph. The 5-11 senior hit five free throws and added one assist to provide the final margin of victory.

Walker, who finished with 15 points, six assists and three steals, was named tournament MVP.

The win enabled M-House (23-5) to earn an automatic bid to the NCAA Division II playoffs and it also evened the season series with the Rams. In their only meeting during the regular season, Albany State downed Morehouse, 107-95.

This was a strange game in terms of appearances. Albany State (18-10) seemed to be in good shape to take control. But they were never able to seize the lead for good and dictate the pace of the game.

That was because coach Arthur McAfee's M-crew owned the lanes at both ends of the floor. Roderick Stubbs grabbed 11 rebounds and SIAC Player Of The Year Harold Ellis had 10 boards.

The fact that Albany turned into the gang that couldn't shoot straight didn't help their cause either. On this night, the Rams may as well have been residents of Bricksville, U.S.A. They converted just 23 of 69 field goal attempts for a lackluster 33.3 percent.

The lack of offense was telling tale that did the Rams in. Charles McGill (13 points) was the only guy to score in double figures for the SIAC's East Region champs. Jimmy Emmers and Scott Jackson scored nine points each.

In the early going, both teams showed sings of tightness. Nearly three-and-half minutes elapsed after the opening tip-off before either team scored.

Albany chose to employ a zone instead of their usual man-to-man defense in order to help neutralize Ellis who is one college ball's best in the transition game. Ellis wound up with 12 points -- about half his season's average.

But his work on the boards was instrumental in keeping Albany at bay. The Rams' zone did force Morehouse to seek other offensive options. Sophomore center Stewart Watkins, who ended the game with 17 points to lead M-House, provided solid play in the paint, particularly at the offensive end. Stubbs added 11 points for the tournament champs.

While the Maroon Tigers are more

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