SWAC MEN'S TOURNAMENT

Southern comes through with overtime win

The SWAC men's tournament was nothing more than your good old-fashioned western style shoot-out between the league's top gunslingers, Southern and Texas Southern.

The game had all the thrills and spills that the most avid fan could want. And when the smoke cleared, Southern had won the showdown, 86-81 in overtime.

For the better part of the game, Texas Southern appeared destined to be the SWAC representative in the NCAA playoffs. They outplayed the Jaguars by beating their vaunted press and keeping Southern off the boards. But going into the last 12 minutes of the second half, the Jags started clawing their way back, using their full court pressure to harass Tigers' ball handlers. This enabled coach Ben Jobe's team to crank up their fast break that approached Mach II speed.

The Jaguars found the Tigers particularly difficult to deal with on that evening. In two prior meetings during the regular season, Southern had prevailed both times (102-91, 94-80).

With 1:22 left in OT, Texas Southern took an 81-80 lead when Andre Young scored on a lay-up after SU guard Carlos Sample was stripped of the ball as he attempted to drive the lane. With 0:13 left, TSU was in the driver's seat as Darrion Applewhite was fouled in a one-and -one situation. However, Applewhite (a 73 percent free throw shooter during the regular season), missed the front end, which opened the door for the Jags.

SWAC Men's All-Tournament Team

Carlos Sample	Southern University	Guard
Andre Young	Texas Southern	Guard
Charles Price	Texas Southern	Forward
Joe Faulkner	Southern University	Forward
Darryl Battles	Southern University	Forward

Tournament MVP
Charles Price

On the following possession, Sample spotted a mismatch under the basket and fired a pass to Darryl Battles who was fouled in the act of shooting. The senior forward then calmly stepped to the line, sank both free throws and Southern took control for good.

This game belonged to SU after the free throws because the Tigers couldn't get another possession. When Battles was fouled, the officials called an intentional foul which not only gives the fouled team free throws but another possession after the foul shots are attempted. Teams are assessed a technical when an intentional foul is called.

Moreland couldn't believe what he had witnessed. He was so dejected that he left the sidelines momentarily and grabbed himself a can of soda -- perhaps as a move to keep himself under control.

Three seconds is still enough time to get off a desperation shot, which, if made, would've won the title for TSU. But instead, the Tigers were forced to foul again. Sample converted both, then the Tigers were charged with another technical because they called a time out and weren't aware that they used up their allotment. Samples sank another pair to provide the final margin of victory.

Southern (20-10) forced the overtime period thanks to the deadly shooting, quick hands and swift legs of point guard Sample.

Sample tied the game at 70-70 with 57 seconds left to play in regulation on a daring defensive play. TSU's Mason Bryant was in the process of putting up a shot off of an offensive rebound. But Sample swiped the ball away, dribbled the length of the court, and hit the lay-up. He was fouled, but missed the free throw and the Tigers failed to convert a shot as the buzzer sounded, ending regulation play.

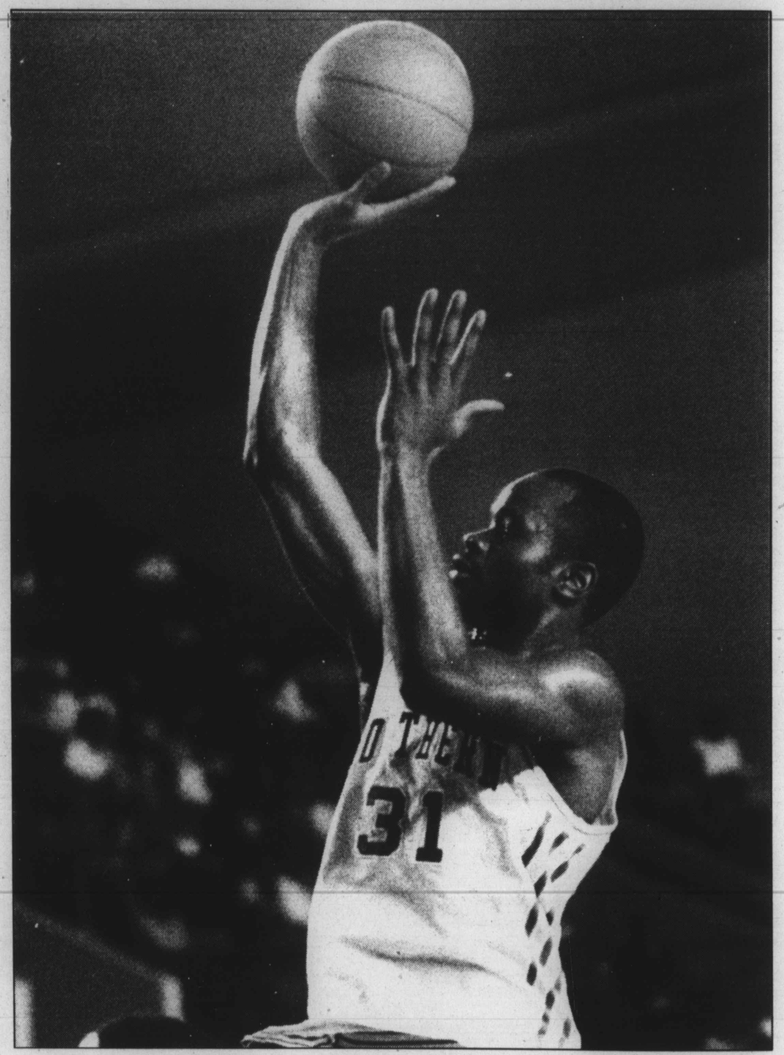


Photo by Mark Gail

Joe Faulkner's shooting helped bring Southern back to life in the SWAC finals vs. Texas Southern.

The Jaguars have their defense to thank for the SWAC tourney trophy this season. They were able to cut off Texas Southern as the game winded down during regulation. Sample (26 points, 12 assists) played like he was possessed, coming down and firing three-pointers at will, which steadily cut into the Tigers' lead. There were other Jags who were also responsible for the surge. Joe Faulkner (25 points, seven rebounds) showed the Tigers a move or two on the acrobatic side and he was a prime factor until he fouled out with five minutes remaining in regulation.

Freshman center Robert Youngblood showed why he's likely to be a force for the rest of his collegiate career. Youngblood (16 points, nine rebounds), displayed uncommon savvy for a rookie and held his own in the paint with the more experienced TSU front line. Bobby Phills rounded out the double figures scoring with 10 points and 10 boards, while Battles finished with nine points and eight rebounds.

Battles, who was ranked No. 5 among the nation's rebounds (11.8 ppg) didn't have their trademark.

Texas Southern (17-13) got plenty of firework from tournament MVP Charles Price, who ended the game with 22 points and 12 rebounds. But what the Tigers didn't get was the usual production from their main man, Fred West.

West fouled out mid-way through the second half and totaled just four points in the finals. Losing his scoring potential was bad enough, but more importantly, Moreland needed him in the paint to battle for rebounds. Not having him around down the stretch, really did a lot of damage to the Tigers' chances of claiming the tournament title.

Still, there were others who took up the slack. Applewhite and Young were superb at the guard spots all night. Applewhite torched SU for 20 points and Young added 17.

The Tigers were able to keep Southern at bay for 25 minutes of the contest, primarily because of the scoring from Price, Applewhite and Young. But the Tigers were never able to slow the pace down sufficiently to take the Jaguars out of their run and gun posture.

-- Lonnie Sheldon



Photo by J.D. Schwalm

Texas Southern coach Robert Moreland had his team well prepared for the Jaguars. But in the end, SU's pressure and Fred West's absence spelled the difference.

SWAC Women's Tourney

Lady Hornets nip Lady Jaguars, 62-60

Alabama State struggled in the won-loss column at the beginning of the season. But in the end, the Lady Hornets found their pot of gold at the end of the rainbow when they eased past Southern University, 62-60 to win the SWAC women's basketball tournament.

The Lady Hornets (16-14) entered the tournament as perhaps the hottest team in the conference. After winning just five of their first 17 games, coach Ron Mitchell's team won 11 of its last 13 games which included a five game winning streak.

Neacole Hall, ASU's all-star point guard, was the key that turned the ignition for her team. The All-American candidate put on a clinic and was voted tournament MVP. In three games, she scored 60 points, dished out 32 assists, and had 13 steals. In the finals, she totaled 26 points, eight assists, and five steals, while shooting 50 percent from the field.

This season, Hall led the the nation in assists (11.1) and steals (5.4).

"Neacole's performance in the tournament was very consistent -- just like it has been all season," said Mitchell. "She was our catalyst. When we were down, she was always the one who got us going."

Hall had ample support from Michelle Archie (16 points, 10 rebounds) and Sharon Ezell (11 points, 12 rebounds). Archie and Ezell's work on the boards helped the Lady Hornets enjoy a 48-38 rebounding edge.

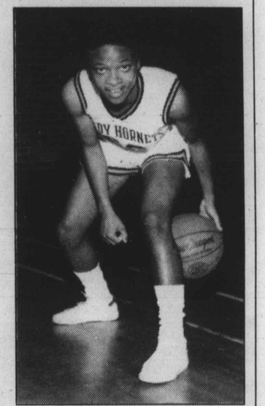


Photo Courtesy of Alabama State

In the tournament, Neacole Hall showed why she is considered one of the nation's premier point guards. For the past two seasons, Hall has led the nation in assists and steals.

Nevertheless, they were ready for the post-season and took ASU to the limit. "We had our chances," said Southern coach James Turner, the Lady Jaguars' second year coach. "It was just a case of my best two shooters (Gibbie Phillips and Claudine Stovall) missing wide open shots that they usually make."

SWAC Women's All-Tournament Team

Claudine Stovall	Southern University	Guard
Neacole Hall	Alabama State	Guard
Michelle Archie	Alabama State	Forward
Gibbie Phillips	Southern University	Forward
Patricia Hoskins	Mississippi Valley State	Center

Tournament MVP
Neacole Hall

ASU had to climb back into contention in the championship final. They came out slowly and Southern grabbed a 10 point lead in the first half.

"We took Southern for granted," Mitchell admitted. "We had beat them five straight times going back to last season. Our team was elated after winning over Mississippi Valley State (67-66) in the semifinals. But we realized that in tournament play, you can't underestimate anyone.

"Going into the finals, our plan was to put the pressure on them by getting an early lead. However, the things we tried to do defensively didn't work out and none of our shots were falling."

Southern was considered a surprise entry in the finals. They didn't have a .500 season (11-18 overall, 5-9 in conference play).

Even though Phillips and Stovall couldn't convert during crunch time, they were still the base of the offense. Phillips ended with 26 points, 10 rebounds, and Stovall added 18. Ronda Wade and Venatrese Handford combined for 15 boards, while Yolanda Cowherd handed out 11 assists.

"The only bad thing about it was that one of the teams had to lose," said Turner.

"But I can't complain. Our kids gave us every fiber that was in them. The fact that we came into the tournament healthier than we had been all year was also a big factor in our favor."

-- Lawrence Curry