

Black and Gold breeze past Saints 92-83

By Matt Smith
Sports Editor

The UNCP men's basketball team used a 60-point second half offensive explosion to fuel a 92-83 victory over Flagler on Feb. 6, giving the Braves consecutive wins for the first time this season since last November.

Black and Gold junior guard Chris Hargrove scored a team-high 20 points in the victory, as the Braves shot almost 62 percent from the floor in the second half.

The Braves led for most of the first eight minutes in the opening half, taking a 10-6 lead with 14 minutes left to play in the first period after baskets by senior forward Brandon Thomas and freshman forward George Blakeney. But Flagler responded with a 13-0 run that put the Saints up by nine at 21-12.

As the Black and Gold looked like they would let another game win slip through their fingertips, the Braves responded, scoring 10-straight points

before the half to cut the Saints lead to just 34-32 at halftime.

Coming out of the break, the Braves' offense exploded for a 60-point output, as the team went on a 9-0 run to retake the lead with 12:12 left to play in the first half.

The mini-run by the Braves gave them a 51-41 lead, but Flagler posted their own 9-0 run to cut the lead to just one with 11 minutes left in the contest.

Braves' run

The teams would trade back and forth baskets until the Black and Gold went on another long 12-1 surge, putting the Braves comfortably ahead 63-52.

The Braves 11-point run was fueled by a pair of 3-pointers by Hargrove and freshman guard K.J. Cooper.

Flagler would continue to try to cut back into the Braves' lead, but UNCP never let the Saints get within more than seven points in the second half, as late-game free throws by Hargrove and



The UNCP men's basketball team huddles before a game. The Braves took down Flagler 92-83 Feb. 6 for their eighth win of the season. Photo by Gabrielle Lover

sophomore guard Marcus Heath sealed the game for the Black and Gold.

The Braves' offense finished the game shooting 54.8 percent. Thomas, Heath and freshman guard Shahmel Brackett added

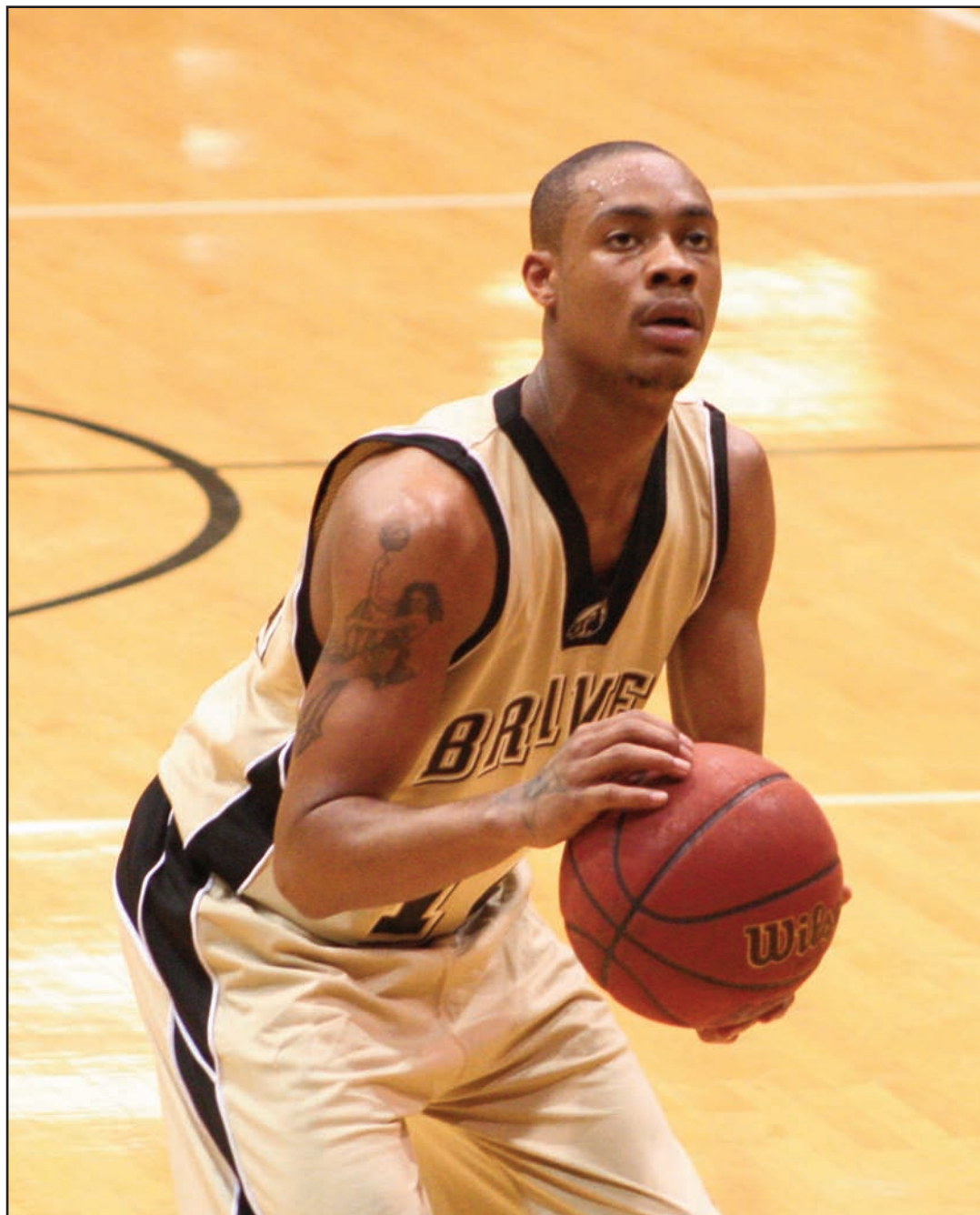
14, 13 and 15 points, respectively, to join Hargrove in double figures. Thomas also finished the game with a double-double after grabbing 10 rebounds in the contest.

Heath was just one assist shy of recording a double-double, finishing the game with nine helpers.

The win moved the Braves to 8-14 on the season and the team now

holds a 4-9 mark in Peach Belt Conference play.

The Black and Gold will next be in action against North Georgia, as the team takes on the Saints Feb. 13 at the English E. Jones Center.



UNCP freshman guard Shahmel Brackett readies himself for a free throw in the Braves' game against Francis Marion. Brackett had a career-high 29 points in the win over the Patriots. Photo by Gabrielle Lover

Men's basketball upsets Francis Marion team

By Nick Phillips
Asst. Sports Editor

On paper, Francis Marion was the better team, but UNCP ended up on the better end of the scoreboard Feb. 3, earning an 89-80 Peach Belt Conference victory inside the English E. Jones Center.

The Braves were led by freshman Shahmel Brackett, who scored a career-high 29 points on the night. Senior Brandon Thomas added 16 points, sophomore Marcus Heath scored 15 points of his own and junior Chris Hargrove tallied 13 points to give UNCP four double-digit scorers.

Freshman George Blakeney grabbed a game-high 10 rebounds and finished just short of a double-double with eight points of his own.

Both teams traded the lead in the first half, with Francis Marion holding a slim, 37-35 lead at the break. Francis Marion came out of the half on a tear, going on a 10-4 run to start the second half.

The Braves would regain the lead for good with just under eight minutes to go in the game, stretching the margin to as high as 12 points.

"I'd say we started the game very well and then went into a lull," UNCP head coach Ben Miller

said. "We snapped out of it in the second half and from that point on it was all about effort. We've got a lot of respect for Francis Marion. They're one of the top teams in our league and if you're a top team in our league you[re] one of the top teams in the country."

On defense, the Braves forced a total of 25 turnovers and blocked five shots. UNCP's stifling defense held the Francis Marion starting five to only 34 points.

UNCP's starters accounted for 81 of the team's final total 89 points, shooting just over 45 percent from the field for the game.

Men's basketball falters

By DJ McCray
Staff Writer

The UNCP men's basketball team fell short again in conference play in a whopping 82-50 loss to No. 25 ranked Georgia College on Jan. 31 in the Bobcats' Centennial Center.

The Bobcats shot an impressive 47.5 percent from the floor and were not shy to shoot it from behind the arc, hitting 12 3-pointers in the contest.

Leading the way for the Bobcats was Graham Martin with 17 points and six assists. His teammates Ty Rowland and Jake Rios added 13 points and

10 points respectively.

UNCP junior guard Chris Hargrove had a team high 10 points off the bench.

Brandon Thomas also contributed with nine points.

The Braves shot a measly 30 percent from the floor and lost the rebound battle 42-32.

UNCP has struggled this season against ranked competition, losing to every ranked opponent they have faced.

In the first half, the Bobcats jumped out to an 11-2 lead fueled by two jumpers and a lay up by Rowland.

Georgia College

would keep the Braves at bay the rest of the half, finishing the half with a 28-18 advantage.

GCSU went into halftime with a more than comfortable 39-20 lead.

The second half was all Bobcats, as the home team increased their lead to almost 40 twice in the half.

The Braves could not ignite their offense and the Bobcats proved to be too much to handle.

The loss was the Braves' 14th of the season, and the team's ninth loss in Peach Belt Conference play. Georgia College has now won 10 consecutive games.

Braves fall 75-57 battling top-25 ranked Montevallo

By Jared LeBlanc
Asst. Sports Editor

The Black and Gold looked to have the early advantage, but Montevallo was able to come from behind and pick up the 75-57 win Jan. 29 at Banktrust Arena.

The loss pushed the Braves' record to 6-13 overall and 2-8 in the Peach Belt Conference, while the win moves the Falcons' record to 15-2 overall and 5-2 in the PBC.

Shahmel Brackett and Brandon Thomas were the big scorers for the Black and Gold. Brackett dropped 15 and Thomas tossed in 14. Thomas and Mike Robinson each ripped down six boards while Nate Priest led the Braves with eight rebounds.

Early lead

The Falcons were led by their starting lineup that scored 68 of their 75 points. Gerald January and Cecil Coleman filled

it up with 20 and 19 points, respectively. The other double-digit scorers coming out of the Falcons' starting lineup were Taurus Dortch with 11 and Mark Plaza who had 10, all of which came from the free throw line.

The Black and Gold started the game out well. They went into halftime with a three-point lead. They looked to ride that momentum early into the second half, but unfortunately for the Braves, Montevallo was able to change the momentum and go on a 10-2 run and took a three-point lead for themselves.

Back-and-forth battle

For the next nine minutes, the Braves and the Falcons were in a back and forth battle. The Black and Gold took the Falcons' lead down to just two points with six minutes to play.

However, that was as close as the Braves would get. The Black and Gold finished 0-7 from the field

for the rest of the game. The lackluster shooting for the Black and Gold allowed the Falcons to go on a 20-4 run to end the game.

For the game, the Braves shot 40.8 percent from the floor, including a 44 percent mark from the floor in the first half.

3-point shooting

Defensively, the Braves had three blocks on the night while forcing Montevallo into 22 turnovers.

Montevallo shot 38 percent from the floor for the game, and the Braves held Montevallo to just 7.7 percent from behind the 3-point line. Montevallo shot 1-13 from 3-point land.

For the night, Montevallo outperformed the Braves' from the free throw stripe, out shooting the Braves 39-23 from the line. The Braves connected on 14 free throws, while Montevallo put in 32 shots from the free throw line.