

Slow start dooms Braves against Saints

By Nick Phillips
Asst. Sports Editor

UNCP could not overcome an early North Georgia lead, and fell to the Saints 78-69 on Feb. 22 inside the English E. Jones Center in Peach Belt Conference play.

The game was originally scheduled for Feb. 13, but was postponed due to the snowy weather.

Senior Brandon Thomas led the Braves with a team-high 22 points in the game, while sophomore teammate Marcus Heath tallied 13 points of his own in the loss. A pair of freshmen also contributed in UNCP's stat book.

Blakeney rebounds

Guard Shahmel Brackett tied his career-high as he dished out six assists, while George Blakeney grabbed a game-high eight rebounds down low.

In the game's first

half, the Jones Center's fire alarms went off, prompting a brief delay in the action. According to UNCP Marketing and Promotions Director Craig Shaffer, the alarms went off due to a faulty sensor in the wrestling portion of the auxiliary gym. The game resumed after approximately five minutes.

Braves rally

Within the game's first two minutes, North Georgia had jumped out to a 14-3 lead as the Braves appeared stuck in their tracks. UNCP would get things going, however, and would bring the game within 11 points at the half.

In the second half, North Georgia held a 15-point lead on three occasions, but the Braves would counter and come back to draw the game to single digits several times over the final minutes of the game.

UNCP was unable to put the cap on their comeback and fell short.

The Braves finished the game shooting 43 percent on the night, as the Saint's defense held the Black and Gold to just a 4-of-14 mark from behind the 3-point line.

Turnover prone

The Braves coughed up 17 turnovers in the contest, leading to 15 points for North Georgia.

With the loss, the Braves PBC Tournament chances are now hanging by a thread.

UNCP will have to win both of its remaining games Feb. 24 on the road against Armstrong Atlantic State, and Feb. 27 at home against Flagler College, and need Lander University to lose one of their two remaining games to earn the PBC East number four seed for the tournament.



UNCP guard Marcus Heath scans the Saints' defense in the Braves' 78-69 loss.

Photo by Gabrielle Lovier

Braves suffer 86-71 defeat in valiant road effort

By Spencer Wakefield
Staff Writer

The UNCP Braves men's basketball team took the court against the Pacers of USC Aiken on Feb. 17 at the Convocation Center in Aiken, S.C., falling 86-71 on the road.

The Braves had 20 turnovers which led to 24 points for the Pacers, playing a key role in the loss for the Black and Gold.

On the night, four

Braves dropped double figure points.

Senior forward Brandon Thomas collected his 11th career double-double by scoring a game high 17 points and pulling in 12 rebounds.

Also coming up big for the Braves were sophomore forward Nate Priest, who contributed 16 points, and senior forward Taylor Hukill, who added 15 points. Both totals were career highs for Priest and Hukill.

Junior Guard Chris

Hargrove scored 11 and also came up with four blocks, which led both teams. The Braves shot just over 42 percent from the field for the game, only hitting 1-8 from behind the arc.

Pacers score

The Pacers had five players in double-digit scoring. Leading the way for USC Aiken was Mark Brown with 16 points. Fourteen of Brown's 16 came in the second half. Coming off the bench for

the Pacers, Sterling Council racked up 14 points. Other scorers were Byron Falson with 14, Re'Mon Nelson and Casey McMasters both accounted for 13 points each. The Pacers shot over 47 percent for the game and shot 6-22 from 3-point land.

In the second half, Priest completed a three-point play, which tied the game up for the third time of the night. Following the tie, USC Aiken went on a 9-2 run resulting in a

10-point lead at 50-40 in just over four minutes. With about 11 minutes to go in the game, Rashad Flowers drove it in for a layup putting the Pacers up 60-46.

Braves respond

But this didn't slow down UNCP.

For the second time in this game, the Braves brought the double digit deficit within single digits. Thanks to Hargrove's lay-up with about 5:30 left in the game, the Braves

were only down 68-61. UNCP stayed in the game, but USC Aiken took advantage of free throws, hitting 11-of-12 over the last three minutes of the game. Aiken finished the game 20-of-28 from the stripe.

Pembroke shot 18-21 from the free throw line.

The loss drops the Braves to an overall record of 8-16, 4-11 in the Peach Belt Conference. USC Aiken improves to 15-8, 10-6 in the conference.

Braves go down swinging

By DJ McCray
Staff Writer

The UNCP men's basketball team lost 82-77 in a tug-of-war battle against No. 12 ranked Augusta State Feb. 8 at the English E. Jones Center.

The Braves were certainly the "underdogs" going into this game and were favored to lose big to the Augusta State's Jaguars.

But UNCP never trailed by more than 10 points the entire game that featured 10 lead changes and four tie scores.

With less than 11 minutes remaining in the first

half, the Braves had a 19-14 lead, but the Jaguars responded quickly going on a 25-13 run, regaining the lead 39-32 at the half.

The Black and Gold showed no intimidation in the second half as they fought to tie the game at 55 apiece with a clutch 3-pointer from Chris Hargrove with 11:25 to go in the game.

Augusta controls

Augusta State controlled the lead for the next five minutes before the Braves' Marcus Heath hit a timely trey to put his team up 69-67. But the Jaguars regained the

momentum and the lead when Fred Brathwaite dropped in a bucket as he was fouled. Brathwaite hit the free throw, making the score 70-69 in favor of the Jaguars.

Hargrove led UNCP with 25 points in the contest. Marcus Heath added 12 and Shahmel Brackett and Taylor Hukill both had 11 points. Nate Priest had a game high nine rebounds.

Augusta State's Brathwaite had a team high 22 points and eight rebounds. Ben Madgen had 17 and teammate Greg Hire dropped 16 points.



UNCP head coach Ben Miller talks to freshman Shahmel Brackett (above) during a time out during the Braves' game against Augusta State.

Photos by Gabrielle Lovier

Black and Gold guard K.J. Cooper scans the Augusta State defense in the Braves' 82-77 loss at home against the Pirates.