

ARKANSAS TECH UNIVERSITY

ATHLETICS

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GOLDEN SUNS POSTS OVERTIME HOME WIN ON SENIOR DAY OVER ARKANSAS-MONTICELLO

RUSSELLVILLE, Arkansas – Arkansas Tech Women’s Basketball closed out the home portion of its 2008-09 schedule here on Senior Night by posting a 71-66 overtime victory over Arkansas-Monticello in Gulf South Conference action in front of a season-high 1,250 fans at Tucker Coliseum.

“What a fantastic crowd we had in here tonight,” Golden Suns Head Coach **Dave Wilbers** said. “It was the best atmosphere since I’ve been here.”

Tech, who improved to 19-7 overall and 9-4 in the GSC, used 53 percent shooting from the field and 5-of-6 free throw shooting in overtime to post the win and move into a second place tie in the GSC West Division standings with the Cotton Blossoms. In addition, the win avenged an 81-64 loss to UAM earlier this season in Monticello.

With the win, is all Tech has to do is win on Saturday at Christian Brothers in its season finale to earn the No. 2 seed in next week’s GSC Tournament in Southaven, Miss. Tech will earn the No. 2 seed thanks to its season sweep over Ouachita Baptist, who is the No. 4 seed in next week’s tournament. UAM split its two games with the Lady Tigers.

“We now control our seed in next week’s GSC Tournament. Is all we have to do now is go out and take care of business on Saturday,” Wilbers said. “Hopefully we’ll build on this win and carry that momentum to Memphis. I know we’ll play with great effort.”

On Senior Night, Tech’s three seniors stepped up and almost single-handedly willed the Golden Suns to victory, as Tech played with just eight players as junior guard **Ashley Grappe** (Benton, Ark.) and junior forward **Heissy Robledo** (Guaviare, Colombia) both sat out the game due to illness. All three seniors scored in double figures, including All-American forward **Amanda Grappe** (Benton, Ark.) picking up her 20th career double-double.

“It was a good win for our team,” the second-year Tech coach said. “We were without Ashley and Heissy and it seemed like all eight players in uniform did something to contribute and I’m really proud of all of them.”

Trailing by nine points at 35-26 with 14:43 left in the game, the Golden Suns used a 23-8 run over a span of nearly eight minutes to push out to a 49-43 lead with 6:10 remaining in the game. The run was keyed by nine points from Grappe and capped by two free throws from freshman forward **Candace Woodruff** (Mineral Springs, Ark.).

Following the run, UAM, who fell to 17-7 overall and 9-4 in the GSC, used a 9-2 run to push in front 52-51 with 2:52 left in the game. The run was capped by a lay-up from Yelitza Rivera. Tech, though, would retake the lead 42 seconds later on two free

throws by senior guard **Rachel Brazell** (Mansfield, Texas). After Brazell hit two more free throws to give Tech a 56-54 lead with 1:17 left in the regulation, the Cotton Blossoms tied the game on jumper by Bethaney Turner with 58 seconds left in the contest. Tech missed two shots in regulation to win the game.

Tech, who trailed 25-24 at the half, scored the first four points of overtime and UAM would get no closer than two points the rest of the overtime session following two free throws by Addie Lees with 3:07 left in the game. The Golden Suns closed the overtime period by hitting 5-of-6 free throws to seal the win.

Unlike the game in Monticello when the Tech was outrebounded by 20 boards, the Cotton Blossoms held just a 34-31 edge on the boards in Thursday's game.

"We fought them on the boards. They are an excellent rebounding team, but we battled and battled them on the glass tonight," Wilbers added.

Grappe, who is the reigning GSC West Division Player of the Week, led the Golden Suns with 17 points and 13 rebounds, while Brazell added 13 points and senior guard **Nikki Earles** (Huntsville, Ark.) scored 11 points and had six assists. The double-double was the eighth of the season for Grappe and it was her 25th game of reaching in double figures.

In addition to the three seniors, freshman center **Taise Da Silva** (Americana, Brazil) scored 11 points in the win.

UAM was paced by a game-high 23 points from Andrea Dubose, while Turner added 10 points off the bench. The Golden Suns held Monica Perkins-Miller to just two points and two rebounds on the night. Perkins-Miller entered the game averaging a team-best 13.9 points and 10.5 rebounds per game.

While Tech shot 53 percent from the field, UAM finished the game shooting 37 percent from the field and 32 percent (9-for-28) from the 3-point line. Tech shot 33 percent from downtown, but hit 19-of-27 free throws (70 percent). Tech committed 25 turnovers, while UAM had 23 turnovers.

The Golden Suns will close out the regular season on Saturday, Feb. 28 in Memphis, Tenn., against Christian Brothers. Tip-off is set for 3 p.m. at Canale Arena on the CBU campus.

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