Aiken to jump the Braves in February

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Braves check in at No. 15 latest regional poll

Late turnover costs Braves another PBC matchup

Braves guard Shamel Brackett attempts a shot on his hands. AUgusta State senior taking 11 points in the region's loss on Feb. 16.

By Curtis Brooks

Sports Writer

By Kelly Mayo

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A season of improvements for the UNCP men's basketball team was again rewarded, this time by the NCAA Division II Men's Basketball committee, as the Braves were ranked ninth in the Southeast Region in the latest poll released on Feb. 9.

The recognition is the first time the Braves have been named in the poll this season, and the first time for the program since joining the NCAA Division II ranks before the 1992-1993 academic year. The Southeast Region poll has a lot of familiar faces for the Braves, with seven of the top 10 teams in the region coming out of the Peach Belt Conference. Augusta State leads the PBC group with a second place ranking, followed by Georgia Southern in third, USC Aiken in sixth, Armstrong Atlantic in seventh, Clayton State in eighth, UNCP in ninth and Francis Marion in 10th covering the PBC.

Lincoln Memorial carries the top spot in the Southeast Region, followed by Queens University and Limestone in fourth and fifth, respectively, as the only three teams outside of the PBC in the regional poll.

Late turnover costs Braves another PBC matchup

By Curtis Brooks

Sports Writer

On the road against Peach Belt Conference rival North Georgia, the UNCP men's basketball team took their ninth loss of the year Feb. 12 as North Georgia scored quickly past UNCP to 72-70.

The Braves once again struggled with holding onto the ball. The team had 30 turnovers compared to North Georgia's 18, including leading into the game after being outscored 31 points off of turnovers. The Jaguars capitalized on the Braves' mistakes, scoring 12 blocked shots, led by senior forward George Blakency's eight denials. For Blakency and Junior Nate Priest also in contributed 13 and 11 points each.

The game remained close from beginning to the end, due to UNCP turnovers. North Georgia capitalized on the Braves' mistakes, scoring 13 points off of turnovers. The Jaguars totalled 12 blocked shots, led by sophomore George Blakency's eight denials. Blakency had added 11 points in the second half, the two teams never found themselves separated by more than three points until the final minute of action.

USC Aiken saw its lead fall to four at 66-62 with 28 seconds remaining before UNCP junior Marcus Heath knocked down an open three-point shot after his defender slipped, cutting the Braves' deficit to one at 66-65.

After a foul, Sterling Council’s two free throws iced the UNCP win, allowing the Braves to move to 66-65. Senior Chris Hargrove had 19 points, nine of which came from the free throw line. Hargrove added two assists, three rebounds and three steals to his stat line.

Defensively, the Braves had 12 blocked shots, led by sophomore George Blakency's eight denials. Junior Nate Priest added four blocks of his own. Blakency also added 11 points in the loss.

As a team, the Braves committed a season-low 10 turnovers and also had a defensive advantage at the free throw line with a 20-to-8 mark.

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Priest and also chipped in by scoring 11 points of his own in the loss. Beside Blakency's big contest, UNCP junior Marcus Heath finished with 12 points in the Braves' loss on Feb. 16.

In the game's second half, the two teams never found themselves separated by more than three points until the final minute of action.

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