Early lead turns to OT loss for Braves

By Nick Phillips

The UNCP men’s basketball team scored the game’s first 11 points against visiting Wingate on Nov. 22, but saw the visitors chip away and steal a 69-65 win in overtime to give UNCP its second-straight loss.

After the Braves jumped out to the early advantage, Wingate slowly worked their way back into the game over the remainder of the first half to take a three point halftime lead.

Both teams fought back and forth in the second half, with senior Nate Priest’s tip-in with 13 seconds remaining sending the game to overtime.

In the extra period, UNCP committed five turnovers after totaling only six giveaways in the first 40 minutes, but had a chance to tie or take the lead before traveling with under 20 seconds left to seal the game for Wingate.

The Braves shot just 39 percent from the floor in the game, while Wingate shot almost 46 percent. UNCP was again outrebounded, 36-32, a statistic that they have had trouble winning all season.

“They won in a couple of key statistics, with one being the rebound battle again,” UNCP head coach Ben Miller said.

“I feel like a broken record saying that. That is something that we need to continue to work on and get better in. When people prepare to play us, they spend a good bit of time on rebounding. It is going to be tougher for us to out-rebound teams this year,” Miller added.

Sophomore big man George Blakeney was the Only Brave to tally a double-digit point total, finishing with 20 points to go along with seven rebounds and two blocks.

The senior pair of Marcus Heath and Priest each added nine points, with Heath passing out five assists and Priest grabbing three rebounds and adding two blocks defensively.

The Braves were troubled by turnovers after committing 19 compared to just 12 by the Cobras.

The Black and Gold’s performance on the glass allowed the team to overcome their shortcomings in the turnover department, by out rebounding Fayetteville State 39-25 and outscoring the host team 17-10 on second chance points.

Brukett’s three lifts Braves past rival FSU

By Curtis Brooks

UNC junior guard Shämmel Brakett’s three pointer with 20 seconds left in the game against 9-9 FSU gave the Braves a 75-73 road victory inside Felton J. Capel Arena on Nov. 15.

In a back and forth matchup between the two squads, there were 12 tied scores and 13 lead changes, including an eight-point rally by the Black and Gold in the final minutes of the second half to grab the win.

Junior forward George Blakeney blocked Fayetteville State’s final go-ahead attempt with 0.3 seconds left on the clock to secure the victory for UNCP after the Braves defense kept the Broncos from scoring in the final 3:41 of the game.

By Curtis Brooks

The UNCP men’s basketball team officially opened its 2011-2012 regular season when they hosted the UNCP Holiday Classic inside the English E. Jones Center on Nov. 11 and 12.

The Braves split their two contests, defeating regional rival St. Andrews 98-76 the first night before falling to Coker 55-53 during the second day’s action.

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Brakett led all scorers with 21 points on 6-of-12 shooting from the field, including 4-of-6 from beyond the arc in 32 minutes of action.

Senior guard Marcus Heath contributed 13 points of his own to go along with five assists.

A trio of Broncos seniors tallied double digits in a losing effort as Michael Carpenier, Jarrett Herington and Tim Plummer scored 14, 12 and 10 respectively.

Braves open regular season with Holiday Classic

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Junior forward George Blakeney led the Black and Gold with 26 points and 24 rebounds in 30 total minutes of action over the two games.

St. Andrews

Against St. Andrews, the Braves dominated the Knights on the glass, out rebounding the visiting team 53-31 despite committing 28 turnovers.

The Braves’ rebounding margin allowed the team to hold a 24-16 advantage on second-chance points, and strong inside play by the Black and Gold.

Senior forward Nate Priest and Blakeney paced the Braves’ frontcourt with a double-double apiece. Priest tallied a game-high 19 points on 8-11 shooting from the field while adding 11 rebounds. Blakeney ended the game with 12 points and 17 rebounds for the Black and Gold.

Peach Belt Conference Preseason all-conference selection Shämmel Brakett led the Braves with 21 points and also collected four assists. Junior guard K.J. Cooper also chipped in 17 points of his own on 6-of-9 shooting with a pair of free throws.

Coker

Coker was able to complete a second half comeback victory against the Braves on the second day of the tournament, as Coker made 20 of 53 free throws in the second half to help the team complete the comeback.

The Black and Gold were out rebounded by the Cobras 37-33, as the Braves struggled in the second half shooting just 26.9 percent after shooting 46.4 percent in the first half.

Blakennky led UNCP with 14 points on 4-of-8 shooting from the field with seven rebounds.

Senior guard Marcus Heath added 12 points and five assists, while freshman Ben Jacobs notched a team-high nine rebounds.

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