

ARKANSAS TECH UNIVERSITY

ATHLETICS

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Contact: Walt Barton, GA SID (479) 968-0645

WONDER BOYS SET TO OPEN PLAY IN GSC TOURNAMENT AGAINST NORTH ALABAMA

RUSSELLVILLE, Arkansas – With the 2008-09 regular season in the rear view mirror, the next challenge awaiting **Mark Downey's** Arkansas Tech Wonder Boys Basketball Team is this year's Gulf South Conference Tournament. The tournament will take place March 4-8 at the Desoto Civic Center in Southaven, Miss.

Tech, whose 19-8 overall and 9-5 GSC West Division record earned the Wonder Boys a bye in the opening round and the No. 3 seed in the West Division will take to the court for the first time on Friday, March 5 at 2:45 p.m. against North Alabama (18-9 overall, 8-4 GSC), the No. 2 seed from the East Division. The 19 wins for Tech are the most since winning 19 games during the 1995-96 season.

The Wonder Boys are making its second consecutive appearance and just third ever appearance in the GSC Tournament since joining the league in 1996. Tech is 1-2 all-time in the GSC Tournament as its earned its first-ever postseason win at the Division II level last season with its 65-49 win over Alabama-Huntsville in the opening round of the 2008 GSC Tournament.

Tech is led by the play of senior guard **Chad Henderson** (Memphis, Tenn.) and senior center **Thiago Cordeiro** (Recife, Brazil), who were both named All-GSC West Division First-Team selections on Monday. The last time the Wonder Boys had multiple First Team All-Conference selections was in 1995-96.

Henderson was Tech's leading scorer in the regular season, averaging 14.0 points per game, while Cordeiro was second on the team in scoring as well as the team's leading rebounder as he averaged 11.7 points and 5.3 boards per game. In addition, Cordeiro led the GSC and is ranked 10th nationally in blocked shots, swatting 2.7 shots per game and is four blocked shots shy of tying the school's single-season record of 76 set by **David Ross** in 1988-89. In addition, Cordeiro, who is shooting a GSC-best 63.2 percent from the field, set a new school record for blocks in a game when he rejected eight shots against Delta State on Feb. 21 in Tech's 86-81 overtime victory. The eight blocks bettered Cordeiro's old record of seven set against Ouachita Baptist on Jan. 22.

Other key performers for the Wonder Boys entering postseason play are junior guard **Brandon Friedel** (Victoria, Texas), who averaged 9.6 points and 3.4 rebounds per game and is second in GSC in three-point field percentage (46.6 percent) and senior forward **Troy Marcus** (Bronx, N.Y.), who is averaging 9.6 points and 5.0 boards per contest and is shooting 61.6 percent from the floor.

The Wonder Boys ranked first in the league and 18th nationally in field goal percentage (49.1 percent) and is second in the GSC in 3-point field goal percentage (36.5 percent). Additionally, the Wonder Boys rank second in the league in blocked shots (4.0 blocks per game) and is second in 3-point field goal percentage defense (29.7 percent).

Meanwhile, Tech's opponent on Friday, North Alabama is led by GSC East Division Player of the Year, senior guard Kenny Johnson, along with fellow First-Team All-GSC East Division selection, senior forward Thomas Fraise. Johnson enters postseason play averaging 15.7 points and 5.0 assists per game and has an assist/turnover ratio of 3.8, which is second in the GSC and fourth nationally, while Fraise averaged 18.4 points and 7.4 rebounds per game during the regular season. Fraise is No. 2 scorer in the league and the No. 3 free throw shooter in the league at 82.6 percent. In addition to those two players, the Lions also have senior forward Andrew Chesney and senior forward Jarelle Redden averaging in double digits. Chesney is averaging 12.2 points per game, while Redden is averaging 11.6 points and 1.6 steals per game.

The Lions ranked second in the league in scoring at 79.4 points per game and they lead the league in free throw percentage at 72.1 percent and are third in the league in steals with an average of 8.2 per game.

This will be the third meeting between the two squads this season and the fifth over the past two seasons. UNA defeated Tech in Florence, 91-90 in overtime on Nov. 29 and again on Jan. 5, 67-61 in Russellville. UNA leads the all-time series with Tech, 6-2 and has won three straight games.

All the Wonder Boys action in the GSC Tournament can be heard live on KWKK (100.9) FM or over the internet at <http://www.athletics.atu.edu>. A webcast (\$5.50 per game) of each game will be available at www.pennatlantic.com.

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