

# ARKANSAS TECH UNIVERSITY

***ATHLETICS***

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## **ARKANSAS TECH MEN'S BASKETBALL OPENS NCAA DIVISION II SOUTH REGIONAL WITH WIN OVER 14TH-RANKED BENEDICT; ADVANCES TO REGIONAL SEMIFINALS AGAINST HOST SCHOOL**

**LAKELAND, Florida** – Arkansas Tech Men's Basketball continued its historical postseason run here Saturday evening as the Wonder Boys picked up a 63-62 win over 14th-ranked and fifth-seeded Benedict in the first round of the NCAA Division II South Regional held at Jenkins Fieldhouse on the Florida Southern College campus.

Tech, who is the No. 4 seed in the South Regional after earning its first-ever GSC Championship in men's basketball with its 79-66 win last Sunday over Valdosta State in the finals of the 2009 GSC Tournament, won its first-ever NCAA Tournament game in its first-ever NCAA Tournament appearance. In addition, the win was Tech's first in a national tournament since earning a 68-60 win over Lewis & Clark State in the first round of the 1996 NAIA National Tournament in Tulsa, Okla. On the season, Tech is now 4-0 in postseason play and is 5-2 in postseason play at the Division II level.

"This is an unbelievable feeling right now for this basketball team. We continue to climb into uncharted territory," Wonder Boys Head Coach **Mark Downey** said following the win. "We survived and now we get to advance to the next round. That is what tournament play is all about."

With the win, Tech improves to 23-8 on the season and advances to the South Regional semifinals where they will meet top-seed and 11th-ranked Florida Southern on Sunday, March 15, at 6:30 p.m. CDT. The top-seeded Moccasins earned its semifinal berth with its 94-77 come-from-behind win over No. 8 LeMoyne-Owen.

The Wonder Boys earned Saturday's win thanks to a lay-up by senior center **Thiago Cordeiro** (Recife, Brazil) with eight seconds left in the game. Cordeiro was fouled on the play, but missed the free throw to give Tech a 63-62 lead. Cordeiro, who has been named both a Second-Team Daktronics and NABC All-South Region selection, finished the game with 14 points, nine rebounds and four blocks.

"Laithe (Massey) made an unbelievable decision on that pass to Thiago and then Thiago finished the play," Downey said. "I thought we didn't play our best game offensively, but credit Benedict, they played a good game and made some shots. Neither team wanted to go home."

Cordeiro's lay-up was needed after Martinis Woody gave the Tigers, who finished the season with a 24-6 record, a 62-61 lead with 19 seconds left after

hitting a pair of free throws. Woody's two free throws came 28 seconds after Darius Lane scored on a lay-up to drop Tech's lead to 61-60.

In the first half, both teams played evenly through the first seven minutes until Tech used a 10-0 run to pull in front 23-13 with 10:46 left in the period. The run was capped by a three-pointer from senior guard **Chad Henderson** (Memphis, Tenn.). The lead remained 27-17 at the 6:25 mark when Benedict used a 9-0 run to pull within 27-26 capped by a lay-up by Woody with 50 seconds remaining in the half.

Tech, who was held scoreless over a six-minute span in the first half, closed the half's scoring a three-pointer by junior guard **Brandon Friedel** (Victoria, Texas) with 17 ticks left on the clock to go into halftime with a 30-26 lead.

Henderson, who was a First-Team All-GSC West Division selection and a member of the GSC All-Tournament Team, led Tech with a game-high 18 points, while senior forward **Troy Marcus** (Bronx, NY) finished with 10 points, including going 6-for-6 at the free throw line and Friedel finished with nine points, four rebounds and four assists.

In the second half, the Wonder Boys extended its lead to as much as 47-37 following a three-point play by junior guard **Terrell Northington** (Detroit, Mich.) with 11:23 left in the game.

Benedict, who advanced to the South Regional Championship Game last season, wasn't done as they used a 14-6 run to pull within 53-51 on a three-pointer by Bennie Lewis with 6:41 left in the game. Tech, though, came right and answered with back-to-back baskets by Henderson to extend its lead to 57-51 with 5:17 left.

"I thought Chad got us some tough points late in the second half after they (Benedict) had pulled within a basket," the Tech coach said.

Following Henderson's back-to-back baskets, the Tigers once again crawled back into the game thanks to a 6-0 run capped by two free throws from Darius Lane to pull within 57-56 with 2:21 left.

Lane led the Tigers with 12 points, while Lewis and Aubrey Brown each finished with 10 points. Woody and Michael Holmes added eight points in the loss.

For the game, Tech shot 39 percent from the field and 35 percent from the 3-point line, while Benedict shot 38 percent from the floor and 40 percent from long distance. Tech held a 40-39 edge on the glass and committed just nine turnovers. Benedict had eight turnovers and held a 26-22 edge in points in the paint.

"I thought our guys battled tonight. They were plugging our point guards and weren't letting them drive into the lane tonight," Downey said. "They kept us on our heels at times. I'm just glad we get to live to see another day."

**-- Tech Athletics --**