

ARKANSAS TECH UNIVERSITY

ATHLETICS

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ARKANSAS TECH MEN'S BASKETBALL ENDS SEASON WITH OVERTIME LOSS AT 11TH-RANKED FLORIDA SOUTHERN IN NCAA-II SOUTH REGION SEMIFINALS

LAKELAND, Florida – Arkansas Tech Men's Basketball saw its season come to an end here Sunday evening as the Wonder Boys fell 95-92 in overtime to 11th-ranked and top-seeded Florida Southern in the semifinals of the NCAA Division II South Regional held at Jenkins Field House on the Florida Southern campus.

Tech, who completed its historical 2008-09 season with a 23-9 record, forced overtime on a three-pointer right before the buzzer by senior center **Thiago Cordeiro** (Recife, Brazil). The three-pointer was just the fourth of the season for the 6-foot-10 post player.

"Thiago has made some big shots for our basketball team this season," Wonder Boys Head Coach **Mark Downey** said. "On that three-point, he caught the ball, shot it and the ball hit the bottom of the net."

In overtime, Tech led 90-89 after a lay-up by senior forward **Troy Marcus** (Bronx, NY) with 2:05 left, but the top-seeded Moccasins (29-6 on the season) closed the game outscoring Tech, 6-2 to post the win and advance to Tuesday's South Regional Final against 15th-ranked Christian Brothers. CBU, who was the GSC West Division champion, advanced to Tuesday's regional final with its 72-53 win over 10th-ranked Claflin in Sunday's other South Regional semifinal.

"The two things that stick out to me is that we allowed them to shoot 52 percent from the field in the second half and they made their free throws, while we didn't make ours," Downey said. "If we make our free throws and box out better on the boards down the stretch, we win the game."

Downey spent a majority of his post game press conference crediting Florida Southern for its ability to hit some big shots in the second half.

"Give them (FSC) some credit, they made some big shots down the stretch and in overtime," the third-year Tech coach said. "We've come a long way from six wins three years ago to the 20+ plus wins this season. That is a credit to the guys in our locker room and this ride has been a lot of fun."

Cordeiro's three-pointer was needed after the Mocs pushed its lead to 84-81 following two free throws by Terry Jenkins with eight seconds remaining. Tech led for most of the second half, until the Mocs used a three-pointer by Brandon Jenkins with 2:12 left in regulation to take a 78-75 lead. Tech, though, came back and tied the game a minute later on a lay-up and free throw by junior forward **Irvin Humphrey** (Boutte, La.).

From that point, FSC hit four free throws to push out to an 82-79 lead with 16 seconds left, until junior forward **Dusan Radivojevic** (Belgrade, Serbia) hit a lay-up with nine seconds left to pull Tech within 82-81.

In overtime, Tech scored the first basket on a lay-up by junior guard **Brandon Friedel** (Victoria, Texas) just 17 seconds into the extra session, but the Mocs came right back and took the lead following a lay-up and a free throw by John Thompson with 3:49 left. From that point, the teams traded the lead until Jenkins' three-pointer with 46 seconds left gave FSC the lead for good. In the overtime period, Tech was 0-4 from the free throw line and missed both of its three-point attempts, while FSC was 4-for-5 from line to hold off the Wonder Boys.

"We had some chances, but didn't take advantage of them," Downey added.

Cordeiro led the way for Tech with a double-double of 19 points and 13 rebounds, while Marcus added 18 points and seven rebounds. Junior guard **Renard Allen** (New Orleans, La.) finished with 17 points, including going 11-for-14 from the foul line and senior guard **Chad Henderson** (Memphis, Tenn.) closed his Tech career with 16 points.

"We want to make this an every year thing to make it into the NCAA Tournament," Downey added. "This group of seniors has been tremendous in turning the fortunes of the program around and I couldn't be more proud of them."

FSC was paced by Brandon Jenkins' 23 points, while Thompson added 19 points and nine rebounds. Rion Rayfield tallied 16 points off the bench, Braxton Williams had 12 points and Rob Eldridge, a Preseason All-American and a Second-Team NABC All-South Region selection, finished with 10 points in 14 minutes of action as he fouled out in the second half. Eldridge entered the game averaging a team-best 15.6 points per game.

In the first half, Tech jumped in front 18-12 just seven minutes into the game thanks to back-to-back lay-ups by Henderson. The Mocs, though, used a 15-9 run to tie the game at 27 with 6:32 remaining in the half.

Following FSC's run, Tech used an 8-0 run to push out to a 35-27 lead with 4:36 left. Tech run was aided by six points from Cordeiro. FSC pulled within 35-33 with 3:29 left, before Tech closed out the half on a 6-4 run to go into halftime with a 41-37 lead.

For the game, Tech finished the game shooting 46 percent from the field and 21 percent (3-for-14) from the 3-point line, while FSC shot 45 percent from the floor and 43 percent (9-for-21) from long distance. The Mocs finished the game shooting 85 percent (34-for-40) from the foul line, including going a combined 24-for-26 from the line in the second half and overtime periods and Tech shot 55 percent (17-for-31) from the foul line, including going 9-for-19 in the second half and overtime.

In addition, Tech finished the game with a 43-40 edge on the glass, including picking up 17 offensive boards and committed just 15 turnovers, while FSC had 20 turnovers in the win.

"We held an edge on the glass, but down the stretch we failed to rebound the basketball and they made us pay for it," said Downey, who led Tech to its first-ever GSC Tournament title, its first-ever appearance in the NCAA Tournament and back-to-back winning seasons this year.

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