

ARKANSAS TECH UNIVERSITY

ATHLETICS

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: January 21, 2010

Contact: Ben Greenberg, SID (479) 968-0645

TOP-RANKED WONDER BOYS SURVIVE UPSET BID AT OUACHITA BAPTIST TO REMAIN PERFECT ON SEASON

ARKADELPHIA, Arkansas – Arkansas Tech Men's Basketball made history here Thursday night at Vining Arena as the Wonder Boys played its first game as the No. 1 ranked team in NCAA Division II.

In its first game as the No. 1 team, the Wonder Boys used a 24-8 run early in the second half to take command of the contest and post a 74-65 victory over Ouachita Baptist in Gulf South Conference action.

OBU, who fell to 4-13 overall and 0-4 in the GSC, made Tech work for the win most of the night as the Wonder Boys held just a 27-24 lead at the half.

"I was disappointed in our effort tonight. We didn't defend or rebound very well," Wonder Boys Head Coach Mark Downey said. "We allowed OBU to dictate the tempo for the entire first half and part of the second half."

Tech, who improved to 17-0 overall and 4-0 in the GSC with the win, turned to its bench in the second half for a spark as junior guard **Willie Sanders** (Jacksonville, Fla.) and senior guard **Marcus Pillow** (Russellville, Ark.) combined to score 19 points after halftime. Sanders finished with 10 points and Pillow added nine points in the win.

"Our bench really gave us a nice lift in the second half," the fourth-year Tech coach said. "I thought Willie gave us energy off the bench and I thought Marcus came in and hit some key shots."

The Tigers, who haven't lost a conference game this season by more than 12 points, opened the second half on a 9-2 run to take a 33-29 lead following a two free throws by Olden Jordan just three minutes into the half.

Following Jordan's two free throws, the Wonder Boys took over as Tech began its run with a basket by Sanders and capped the 24-8 run with three-pointer by Pillow with 11:42 remaining in the game. Pillow's trey gave Tech a 53-41 lead.

OBU, though, used back-to-back three-pointers to pull within 54-47 with 10:13 left, before the Wonder Boys pushed its lead to as much as 15 points following a free throw by senior forward **Irvin Humphrey** (Boutte, La.) with 6:45 remaining. Humphrey's free throw gave the Wonder Boys a 68-53 advantage.

The Tigers would get no closer than nine points the rest of the game as the Wonder Boys posted the win and extended their longest winning streak since winning 20 consecutive games from 1954-55.

"We have got to get better before Saturday's game with Delta State," said Downey, who became Tech's fourth all-time winningest coach with Thursday's win. Downey has now won 64 games with the Wonder Boys as he passed **E.O. Brown**

for fourth on the school's career win list. Brown won 63 games as Tech's coach from 1923-33.

In the first half, OBU scored the game's first seven points and led 7-2 when the Wonder Boys used a 10-2 run to pull out to a 12-9 lead with 9:35 left in the period. After OBU's Scott Day tied the game with a three-pointer, Tech answered with a three-pointer of its own by senior guard **Brandon Friedel** (Victoria, Texas).

Following a three-pointer by Jordan with 7:27 left to tie the game at 15, Tech used a 9-5 run capped by a three-pointer from sophomore guard **Matt Haney** (Dardanelle, Ark.) to push out to a 24-17 lead. The Tigers, though, would close out the half outscoring Tech, 7-3 to go into halftime trailing by three points.

Junior guard **Laithe Massey** (Heber Springs, Ark.) led the way for the top-ranked Wonder Boys with 17 points, while Friedel added 13 points.

Day led OBU with 17 points, while Belford Williams tallied 15 points and a game-high eight rebounds and Jordan added 10 points in the loss.

For the game, Tech shot 46 percent from the field, 41 percent from long distance and 57 percent (13-for-23) at the free throw line, while OBU shot 54 percent from the field and 44 percent from the 3-point line. The Tigers shot 57 percent in the first half.

Along with outshooting the Wonder Boys, the Tigers held a 28-22 edge on the boards, but committed 25 turnovers that led to 31 Tech points. Tech finished the night with 12 turnovers and 17 steals.

The Wonder Boys will return to action on Saturday, Jan. 23, when they play host to Delta State (13-3 overall, 4-0 GSC) in first place showdown at Tucker Coliseum. Tip-off for Saturday's game is set for 6 p.m. The Wonder Boys enter the game having won 14 straight home games, which is currently the 12th longest active homecourt winning streak in Division II.

"We need to pack Tucker Coliseum on Saturday night," Downey added.

-- Tech Athletics --