

# ARKANSAS TECH UNIVERSITY

***ATHLETICS***

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## **GOLDEN SUNS EARN TRIP TO SOUTHAVEN, POST HUGE ROAD AT OUACHITA BAPTIST**

**ARKADELPHIA, Arkansas** – Arkansas Tech Women’s Basketball sealed its trip to Southaven, Miss., for the 2009 Gulf South Conference Tournament here Thursday by using a strong second-half effort to post a 75-66 road win over Ouachita Baptist at Vining Arena. Tech outscored OBU 46-32 in the second half.

Tech, who improved to 18-5 overall and 8-3 in the GSC with the win, remained in a second place tie in the GSC West Division with Arkansas-Monticello. UAM picked up an 85-60 win Thursday at Henderson State.

Thursday’s game started about 45 minutes late due to the Golden Suns being stranded for almost 90 minutes on I-40 just past the Blackwell exit due to a tragic accident.

“We had to fight a lot of adversity coming here this afternoon,” Golden Suns Head Coach **Dave Wilbers** said. “Our hearts and prayers go out to everyone who was involved in that tragic accident. I was impressed with the way this basketball team played despite all the adversity we had to deal with.”

The Golden Suns, who trailed 34-29 at the half, used a 19-3 run over a span of eight minutes in the second half to turn a 36-29 deficit into a 48-39 lead with 11:12 left in the game following a lay-up by senior All-American forward **Amanda Grappe** (Benton, Ark.).

Grappe, who scored just four points in the first half, finished the game with 26 points after scoring 22 after halftime.

“Amanda really stepped up and played like an All-American in the second half,” Wilbers said. “She was aggressive and made her shots.”

Tech’s lead eventually grew to 52-42 with 8:44 left following two free throws by senior guard **Rachel Brazell** (Mansfield, Texas). After OBU used a 4-0 run to pull within 52-46, the Golden Suns used a 12-5 run to push out to a 64-51 lead with 5:15 remaining. The run was capped by two more free throws from Brazell, who finished with a season-high 13 points, including going 8-for-8 at the free throw line.

Following Tech’s run, OBU used a 12-4 run capped by a three-pointer from Tamara Robinson with 1:20 left in the game to pull the Lady Tigers (17-7 overall, 6-5 GSC) within 68-63. That would be as close as OBU would get as Tech closed out the game hitting 7-of-8 free throws to make the final margin. The loss at home by OBU was it first of the season as the Lady Tigers entered the game with an 11-0 record at Vining Arena.

“This was one of our best games of the year,” the second-year Tech coach said. “Our seniors have been the key to our season. They have all overcome some adversity and I’m proud of those three young ladies.”

Senior guard **Nikki Earles** (Huntsville, Ark.) was the third Golden Sun in double figures as she finished with a double-double of 11 points and a game-high 10 rebounds. Tech's inside post tandem of junior **Heissy Robledo** (Guaviare, Colombia) and freshman **Taise Da Silva** (Americano, Brazil) combined for 17 points and 11 rebounds as Da Silva scored eight points and pulled down seven boards and Robledo had nine points and four rebounds.

"I thought Heissy and Taise battled and played really well tonight," Wilbers added.

OBU was paced by 16 points from Gabby Coleman, while Robinson and A'Laeshia Adams each 10 points in the loss.

In the first half, OBU led 19-12 just 10 minutes into the game, before Tech used an 11-4 run to tie the game at 23 with 4:21 left. Tech's run was capped by a lay-up from Da Silva. From that point, OBU used an 11-4 of their own to push out to a 34-27 advantage following a three-pointer by Coleman with 1:10 left, before Tech closed the gap to 34-29 at the half on a basket by Earles with 40 seconds left. Earles scored seven of her 11 points in the first half.

For the game, Tech shot 51 percent from the field, 40 percent from the 3-point line and 72 percent (23-for-32) at the free throw line, while OBU shot 38 percent from the floor, 32 percent (7-for-22) from downtown and 74 percent (23-for-31) from the foul line. In addition, Tech held a 38-27 edge on the glass and outscored OBU, 40-22 in the paint.

Tech will return to action in less than 48 hours when they GSC West Division leader Delta State (20-6 overall, 10-1 GSC) to Tucker Coliseum for a 4 p.m. contest on Saturday, Feb. 21. Delta State picked up an 82-44 win Thursday at home over Southern Arkansas.

**-- Tech Athletics --**