

ARKANSAS TECH UNIVERSITY

ATHLETICS

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GOLDEN SUNS SNAP THREE-GAME WINNING STREAK, FALL ON THE ROAD AT HARDING

SEARCY, Arkansas – Arkansas Tech Women’s Basketball saw its three-game winning streak come to a halt here Saturday night as the Golden Suns fell 80-48 to Harding in Gulf South Conference action at Rhodes Fieldhouse.

Saturday’s game was a milestone for the Golden Suns as they played its 1,000th all-time game in the program’s 32-year history.

Tech, who fell to 17-6 overall and 7-3 in the GSC, couldn’t overcome a 23-5 run by the Lady Bison over a span of nearly nine minutes in falling to Harding for just the second time in school history and the first time since 1993. The loss snapped a 24-game winning streak by the Golden Suns over the Lady Bison.

“We didn’t play very good defense tonight and that was very disappointing,” Golden Suns Head Coach **Dave Wilbers** said. “But give Harding credit, they hit their shots and played a good game against us.”

Tech, who remained in a second-place tie with Arkansas-Monticello despite the loss to Harding, scored the game’s first basket on a three-pointer by senior guard **Rachel Brazell** (Mansfield, Texas), before Harding (18-6 overall, 4-6 GSC) used an 18-7 run to pull out to an 18-10 lead just seven minutes into the contest. Brazell started in place of junior **Ashley Grappe** (Benton, Ark.), who suffered an injury at the end of the Henderson State game. Grappe is expected to return to the line-up next week.

“We were playing with our point guard tonight, but we’re not using that as an excuse,” the second-year Tech coach said. “We just have to battle back as a basketball team.”

The Golden Suns pulled within 18-14 with 12:03 left in the half, before Harding went on its 23-5 run to push out in front, 41-19 with 1:13 remaining in the half. Tech, though, closed the gap to 41-24 at the half thanks to five points from sophomore guard **Henriette Ellingsen** (Bergen, Norway).

In the second half, Tech had some chances to cut into Harding’s halftime lead, but the Golden Suns missed its first five shots before junior forward **Heissy Robledo** (Guaviare, Colombia) scored a lay-up with 17:29 left in the game to drop Tech’s deficit to 41-26. During Tech’s scoring drought, Harding misfired on its first six shots.

“We had some chances in the opening four minutes of the second half to cut into Harding’s deficit, but we continued to miss our shots,” Wilbers said.

Following Robledo’s lay-up, Harding used a 27-11 run over the next 10 minutes to push out to a 68-37 lead following a three-pointer by Leah Fugett. Tech would get no closer than 68-39 following two free throws by senior forward **Amanda Grappe** (Benton, Ark.) with 5:59 left in the game. HU’s lead eventually grew to as much as 73-39 after a three-pointer by Lindsey Root with 4:58 left in the contest.

Grappe led the way for Tech with 13 points, but she was only 2-for-7 from the field. She hit 9-of-10 from the free throw line. The 13 points moved Grappe past former Golden Suns **Lanell Dawson** (1988-90) into 10th place on the school's all-time scoring list with 1,634 points.

In addition to Grappe, Brazell tied her season-high with 11 points as she was 3-for-5 from the 3-point line on the night.

Harding was paced by 20 points from Stacey Owens, while Ashley Anderson scored 14 points. Root and Catherine McMenemy chipped in with 12 and 10 points respectively.

For the game, Tech shot a season-low 29 percent (14-for-48) from the field and 28 percent (4-for-14) from long distance. The Lady Bison shot 51 percent from the field and 59 percent from the 3-point arc. In addition, HU held a 41-26 edge on the boards and outscored Tech, 36-16 in the paint.

The Golden Suns will return to action next Thursday, Feb. 19, when they travel to Arkadelphia, Ark., to face Ouachita Baptist in a 6 p.m. contest at Vining Arena. OBU enters the game with a 17-6 record and 6-4 mark in the GSC after picking up an 85-81 home win Saturday over Arkansas-Monticello.

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