Chandler scores 35; extends winning streak

By Dillon Flanigan
Sports Editor

The Men's Basketball team extended their winning streak to three games as they defeated American International College Yellow Jackets, AIC, 88-74 on Feb. 11.

"We just had no energy. We're flat, no energy. We didn't compete. We're just going through the motions and sometimes to do that, you're gonna end up hurting yourself and you're gonna give one away that you should have," Head Coach Scott Burrell said.

Two minutes into the game, down 4-0, Burrell could not stand still any longer, calling a timeout. It was not a blowout, and it was early, but in February, nipping unmotivated team play is essential as each game counts.

"In the first half, we were better after the start of the game, but didn't get stops on defense. As the game went on, the guys got their juices flowing a little bit more," Burrell said. "They got more competitive, and they battled a lot more in the second half, they came out strong, and we got stops right away, three steals right away and that kept our momentum going."



PHOTO | WADE BARILLARO

Forward Antonio Chandler, a senior, dunks in the second half.

As the starting-five was flat in the open, Burrell's first choice off the bench to provide a spark was guard Sean James, a senior, who earlier in the season indicated that James needed to be more consistent from the three-point line. As James entered, he made an immediate impression from beyond the arch and hit three of four three-pointers ending his night with 11 points in total, tied for second most in the game with guard Christian McClease, a freshman.

"He made his first one and that gave a lot of confidence. He's been struggling the last few games, but you know this might be the game that he bounces back from and where he recovers it and finds a stroke," Burrell said. "He shot it well. Three for four, that's what we need him to do. We need him to make those open shots."

Holding a 43-37 lead out of the half, defensively, forward Cherif Diarra, a junior, had a very strong mark in the game. With three straight steals, Diarra created scoring opportunities on the offensive side contributing to a 10-point scoring run.

At times, stopping the Yellow Jackets offense was not easy. Jack Hall, who finished with 20 points, went 6-10 from the three-point line and was backed by Justice Ellison with 18.

"We know they have really, two really good scores. We know Jack, it's hard to stop a shooter when he gets it going. He made his first couple, and he found a good rhythm, and we just had to stay in them. We couldn't leave him, couldn't give him any space," Burrell said. "I think the guys did a great job denying him late in the second half, which slowed him down a little bit."

"Obviously Ellison's a great scorer. We had to stay on him and have a whole bunch of guys run at him and try to not let him get it going early," Burrell said.

Though Hall and Ellison could score, they did not even come close to the level of dominance that forward Antonio Chandler, a senior, displayed. With multiple powerful dunks in the second half alone, Chandler climbed to third place in the NE10 for the most points scored in a game this season behind Donte Pope from Franklin Pierce University and teammate guard Albert Vargas, a junior.

"It means the world. The most important thing is to win the game. My teammates just found me, and I converted," Chandler said.

Chandler grabbed 10 boards and went 15 for 18 in field goals, the latter has him tied for first place in the NE10 with Pope for most field goals completed in a game this season.

For more on this story visit thesouthernews.com

Women's Basketball breaks losing streak

By Dillon Flanigan
Sports Editor

On Feb. 11 the Women's Basketball team snapped their two-game losing streak as they defeated American International College Yellow Jackets, AIC, 78-60.

After the last two games went down to the wire, and not in the Owls favor, they took an early lead and played comfortably throughout the game.

"We focused on getting back to those things that you know got us 16 wins," Head Coach Kate Lynch said. "I think we did a really good job in transition. We took our time; we were patient, and we shared the basketball. I'm really proud of the effort."

In transition, as Lynch described, they found openings spreading the ball around early.

The first eight points were scored by four of the five starters, capped by forward Katie Williamson, a graduate's, layup.

Williamson would make three of four free throw attempts and hit a jumper as the first half expired. Her threat in the paint was tamed by the Yellow Jackets as every pass was either broken up, shots were blocked or her shots were missed.

"Offensively she wasn't absent, obviously, she's one of our biggest scores currently," Lynch said. "The good thing about this team is that were deep, and at any point anybody can step up."



PHOTO | WADE BARILLARO

Guard Hope Fox, a junior, drives to the rim.

Though Williamson may not have had a stellar night offensively, Lynch explains that her presence helped the team in other aspects. She had 12 rebounds and two blocks on the night, the latter places her second all-time in university history in blocks with 118.

"I wouldn't be able to be where I am if it wasn't for my team to encourage me and pick me up every single day so I'm really grateful," Williamson said.

With Williamson's one-sided night, the team turned to forward Rheyna Steinauer, a junior, and to the other three starters, where combined scored 64 of the total 78 points. With this 18-point win was much comfier cushion than a month ago as the Owls narrowly won 88-85 in overtime over AIC.

"When we played them last time, we knew it shouldn't have gone to overtime," Steinauer said, who had five rebounds and 15 points on Feb. 11.

"We knew that wasn't going to happen again, and we knew we could just shut them out, and that's exactly what we did. We had a game plan, and we stuck to it, and that's exactly what happened," Steinauer said.

With five minutes left in the game, James Moore Field House was in silence as the referees stopped play and signaled for assistance to guard Hope Fox, a junior, who was down. After a few minutes, she was helped up by the Yellow Jackets team athletic trainer, university athletic trainer Deanna Laubach and team manager Nicole Moran.

Lynch did not see what led up to the officials calling a timeout, but Fox, who was in high spirits post-game, did not return in the final minutes as Laubach evaluated her for a potential head injury.

This win and the margin of victory aligns with previous games this season as they have beaten several teams by double digits.

For more on this story visit thesouthernews.com

University Dance Team places fifth at Nationals

By Dillon Flanigan
Sports Editor
By Avery Martin
Contributer

Over winter break, the University Dance Team competed at the Universal Dance Association's College National Championships in Orlando, Florida. Placing fifth in the nation, the team achieved their goals and captain Sabrina Downs was influential in making it happen.

Downs, a senior business major, has been on the team since the second semester of her freshman year at the university. She initially did not make the team in her first semester but secured a spot on the second try.

"I tried out again in the spring and I made the team. I was following through social media, seeing them at games, definitely watching them to see what I could bring to the table," Downs said, a New Britain native who is also an RA on campus.

Downs did not participate in dance as a child but found her love for it in high school when she took two classes. She said her desire to compete on a collegiate team inspired her to choose the university. Now a senior, she was elected captain for her final year.

Junior Bella Cassin, who is also on the team, says Downs was the perfect choice for the role.

"In times like this, when as a teammate you are looking for some guidance, she has always been there. Any questions you have, even if you just need to talk about something, she's always been a person you can go to," Cassin said.

Downs led the team to their first Nationals in 10 years in January. There they partnered with the Cheer Team to take fifth in the nation in the open spirit game day program.

"I didn't really have any expectations. I just did it for the experience," Downs said. "I just came out here to dance and do as best as I can."

Cassin says the experience has been the highlight of her dance team experience.

"It was really awesome to even get to Nationals in the first place, and to have that opportunity as a team to really show the growth that we've had and all the skills we've been building up," Cassin said.

The team of 22 dancers worked hard in preparation, training multiple times a week at the Pelz Gymnasium to perfect their routines.

"I was so grateful to be able to do that. It was a lot of hard work. We spent most of our winter break in Pelz having practices, practicing with cheer to prepare for our routine with them," Cassin said.

Downs says the practices were difficult but rewarding.

"That was so exhausting, but it was so much fun at the end of the day," Downs said.

Prior to Nationals, the team only had one other competition in the fall semester. However, Downs said it was good preparation to compete at the National Championships. There, they competed against teams from across the country.

"It's a wonderful opportunity to compete against them because these are teams we look up to. It's like they are doing great things, and we want to be there," said Downs.

She noted some of the schools they watched dance at the championship included Louisiana State University, Long Island University and the University of Minnesota.

Now back on campus, Downs hopes the recent results inspire more freshmen to join the team. Try-outs occur twice every academic year.

"It just has to be a right fit," Downs said. "It's just a matter of if you have the drive if you want to work towards getting better. You don't have to be perfect."

With a top five finish at Nationals, it brings more attention for the team, and more interested dancers.

"Right now they are really looking at us because we went to Nationals this year, we did a lot of competitions, we are a lot more active on social media, so people had a lot more to look at," Downs said.