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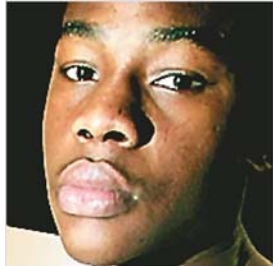
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After CBI win, TU eyes its future



BRIGHT FUTURE

Ben Uzoh: Is expected to take charge of a TU squad next season along with center Jerome Jordan.

Jordan and Uzoh have won 45 games in their first two seasons and will take charge of a basketball program that will have loftier goals next season.

Uzoh spoke of the future shortly after the 70-64 win over Bradley.

"Going into this tournament, our goal was winning it, but at the same time we had to take the learning experience from it," said Uzoh, a clipping of the championship net in his ear. "We want to take the intensity and high level of play into next year.

"The NCAA Tournament is where we want to be. This feels great, but at the same time we can't be satisfied."

Coach Doug Wojcik snipped down the net just three months after snapping because of a lack of support at home games.

THE DAD'LL DO IT DAD CONTEST

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Wojcik's late December tirade was an afterthought when a sellout crowd of 8,455 fans filled the Reynolds Center for the finale. The standing-room-only crowd purchased tickets in less than 36 hours.

His appreciation for the crowd on Friday night ran deep.

"I've only been here three years and people don't know me well," Wojcik said. "There weren't a whole lot of reasons to come out early other than those true blue, loyal fans. We've been able to capture something now that we could never do with a marketing plan.

"I've always said 90 percent of it was on me and the team," added Wojcik, whose team finished at 25-14. "We had to win. This, over the past three weeks, is priceless to us."

Playing at home five extra times this season turned out to be a blessing, the TU coach said. Fans were able to catch the emergence of a basketball team that began hitting its apex at the Conference USA Tournament.

Tickets were sold on a first-come, first-served basis, and fans began lining up early to purchase tickets for each of the CBI home games. The result was a passionate fan base with no empty seats found near the court.

"We've created a great homecourt advantage here," Wojcik said. "There have always been 5,000 great fans here. But (the CBI was) an opportunity for people to come that don't get to come here often and get seats that they bought."

With Friday's victory, the Hurricane has won 22 straight nonconference home games. It's the second-longest streak in school history since the program captured 29 straight from 1982-86.

Tulsa's nucleus next season will include Jordan in the middle. The 7-footer was named the CBI's championship series most valuable player after averaging 13.3 points, 11.6 rebounds and 4.6 blocks.

He finished with eight double-doubles this season, with six of those coming in Tulsa's 10 postseason games including the C-USA and CBI.

McDade laughed when asked about Jordan's late-season heroics.

"My girlfriend thought we were going home for spring break and when we found out we were playing in the CBI, she tried to get mad at me," McDade said. "I said you need to get mad at Jerome Jordan."

By [ERIC BAILEY](#) World Sports Writer

4/6/2008

Last Modified: 4/6/2008 4:58 AM

Calvin Walls' message was brief following Friday night's College Basketball Invitational championship-clinching win over Bradley.

The TU senior sought sophomores Jerome Jordan and Ben Uzoh, catalysts in the Golden Hurricane's late-season surge.

"After everything settled down, I turned to Jerome and Ben and said to 'keep it going,'" Walls said. "Obviously, they're the future of this program."

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Uzoh finished averaging a team-high 15.6 points. He'll continue to be TU's go-to guy next season.

"Don't challenge Ben too much, because he's going to come up with a play," Wojcik warned opposing teams. "He's a winner."

TU will also return starter Ray Reese. Wojcik said the senior-to-be was a key reason why the Hurricane won 15 of its last 19 games.

"The Reynolds Center has a nice team for next year," senior Rod Earls said. "With Ben, Jerome and Ray, they'll have something to watch every week."

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By ERIC BAILEY World Sports Writer

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1. 4/6/2008 10:24:19 AM, tufan, tulsa

Tulsa Basketball at the Reynolds center during the tournament was a blast. I have had season tickets the last four years. WOW, what a change, congratulations to the team and staff on the TU accomplishments this year.

To the writer of the article.....The comment about first come first serve is wrong. At 8:31 am, one minute after the tickets went on sale , all the center sections were sold out.

2. 4/6/2008 3:36:47 PM, Frank Thomas, Bixby

I'm so excited about the men's program but still have a lot of questions about the women next year.

3. 4/6/2008 5:34:25 PM, Frank, Tucson

Find a true point guard, and I see NCAA next year!!! Congratulations to the players, coaches and fans for making the season's end a memorable one. GoooooooooooooooooTU!!!!

4. 4/6/2008 9:48:13 PM, justme,

tufan - It was first come...first serve. I got in immediately when tickets went on sale for both of the Bradley games and got great seats in section 105 right at midcourt both times.

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