

Players Honored

Bears Win Second Annual Mercer Invitational



L to R Standing: Coach Wilder, Ken Redmond, Jim Hildebrandt, Seabe Thornton, Jim Graham, Tom Mitchell, Doug Porter, Judd Roberts, Marvin Bailey, Coach Donald Veal. Kneeling: Bruce Gordy, Robert Belloir.

Bears Rip Southern, 73-59

By Louis Johnson
Sports Editor

Perhaps influenced by performances of "underdog" teams in some bowl game, the Mercer Bears used a tenacious defense and ripped pre-tournament favorite Georgia Southern to shreds, 73-59, to win the second annual Mercer Invitational last weekend in the Coliseum.

Nowhere near favorites and bringing the worst record, 1-4, into the tournament, the Bears destroyed their opponents with surprising ease. They trailed only once in the entire tournament, falling behind Ft. Valley State 1-0 in their first game, and dominated the All-Tournament team, with Little All-America candidate Judd Roberts capturing Most Valuable Player honors. Robert Belloir and freshman Bruce Gordy were selected to the All-Tourney team. Other members of the All-Tournament included Walter Gilmore of Ft. Valley State, Kenny Davis of Georgetown and David Westfield of Georgia Southern.

In the first game, the Bears rolled up a twenty-point lead in the second half of play and fought off a game Ft. Valley team for a 80-70 victory.

The Bears displayed a balanced scoring attack with five players scoring in double figures. Roberts and Belloir led the way with 17 a piece, followed by Gordy, Jim Graham and Marvin Bailey, another freshman, with 14 each. Gordy, a product of Lanier High, made his debut as a starter one he'll long remember as he played a fine defensive game and rebounded well against players who were as much as six inches taller.

The Bears utilized a fast break with crisp, pin-point passes to run away with the Wildcats, who had a dismal night from the floor, hitting

only 28 of 92 shots for a 29.5 per cent shooting average. Mercer hit on 33 of 77 field goals for 43.5 per cent. The Bears held a big edge in rebounding, capturing 75 errant shots to 51 for the Wildcats.

In the championship game, the Bears played defense like it was supposed to be played. They allowed the Eagles only eight points in the last nine minutes and won going away. The Bears led 8-1 early in the game and increased that lead to as much as 11 points before their biggest lead of 14 late in the game and at its conclusion.

With 6-5 Bailey sticking to Southern's Roger Moore like glue and getting plenty of help from his teammates when needed, the Bears held Moore to only four points after he had wrecked Georgetown the night before with 29 points. The Eagles had their hands full as they tried everything in their "playground" looking offense, but their inability to hit from outside proved to be decisive in the outcome.

The Bears hit on 28-64 field goals for 45 per cent while holding Southern to 27-84 for just 33 per cent. These percentages gave the Bears a 44.5 shooting percentage for the two games, while their opponents shot at a cool 32 per cent.

The Eagles held a slim advantage in the rebound department however, claiming 54 to 50 for the Bears. These figures gave the Bears a two game total of 125 rebounds to 105 for their opponents.

This was only part of the story that spelled victory for the Bears. Perhaps the most significant fact is that the Bears defense held the opposition to an average of only 64.5 a game, far below their season average prior to the tourna-

ment of 85 points-per-game allowed. Mercer averaged 76 points for the two games, just four points below their season average before the games.

Kenny Davis of Georgetown ran away with scoring honors in the tournament with a total of 61 points. His teammate, James Davis, an All-America candidate, was runnerup with 56 points.

The next home game for the Bears will be on Jan. 9 against a tough Georgia State team that defeated the Bears in the first game of the season. The young State team has been playing the role of giant killers this year, having beat the Bears, a usually strong Florida Southern quintet, and Rollins. This should be an interesting rematch for a re-vitalized Bear five.

Coach Bob Wilder said that Georgia State is a much improved team and will be tough to beat. "They beat Rollins and Rollins has a win over Stetson, who beat us in our first home game," said Wilder.

Coach Wilder, still savoring the weekend victories, expressed pleasure over the recent play of his Bears. "We didn't shoot as much as we usually do, but they played a much smarter game and good defense, and you can't win until you play defense," said Wilder.

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The intramural basketball season starts on Jan. 9 with MIM meeting Willards at 6 p.m. Next week will see a full slate of games starting with Leo's facing the Snakes at 7 p.m. on Jan. 13, followed by the Rebels and Big match. On Jan. 14 the Atonis take on P. K.'s at 7 p.m. and Crescents will go against the affiliates at 8 p.m. Jan 16 has game, Leo's against P. K.'s

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