

Sports

Tulsa captures NIT crown

United Press International
NEW YORK — Nolan Richardson issued a warning in just Wednesday night, but if you saw the way his unheralded Tulsa team beat Syracuse in a bitterly played National Invitation Tournament final, you'd know the NCAA may not be laughing for long.

"Last year we won the junior (college) title and tonight, we took the NIT," said Richardson, after the Golden Hurricane pulled out an 86-84 overtime triumph. "Now we can go for three next year — the NCAA."

Led by a superb performance from center Greg Stewart, Tulsa capped one of the most remarkable turnaround seasons in recent college basketball history by edging the Orangemen in front of a partisan Syracuse crowd at Madison Square Garden.

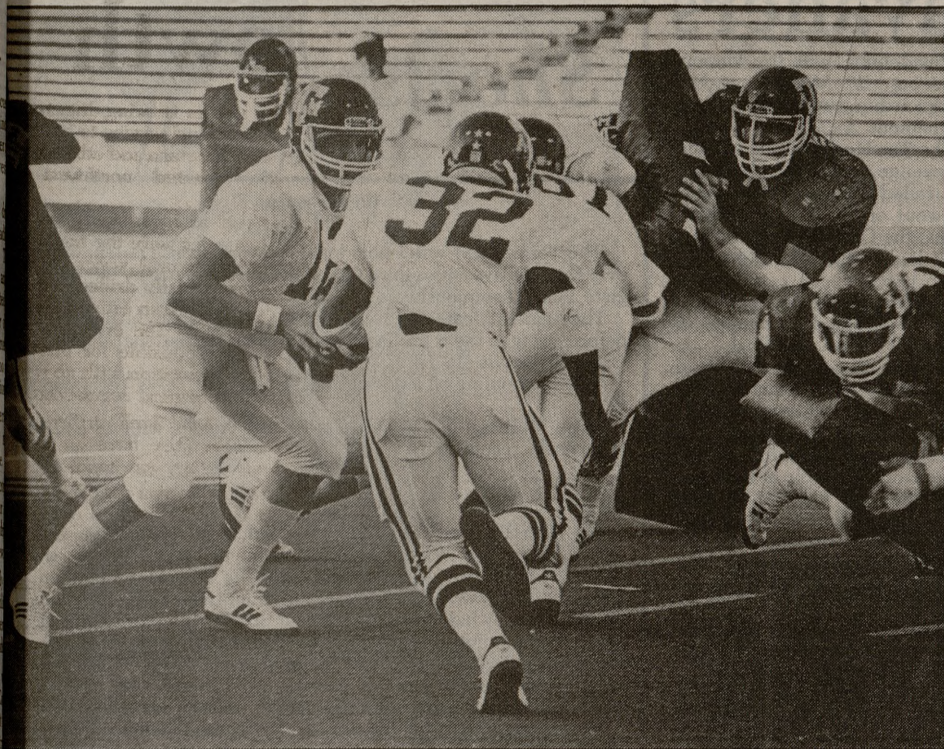
"I'm very proud, I think we've gotten some attention for Tulsa and I think it's the biggest sports event in the history of Tulsa," said Richardson, who turned the Golden Hurricane into a 26-7 team after inheriting an 8-19 squad that hadn't posted a winning record since 1974-75.

Stewart, a native of the Bronx, N.Y., was named the tournament Most Valuable Player after scoring a team-high 23 points, including the winning basket with 30 seconds left in overtime.

"I never thought I'd get to play in the NIT, let alone get the winning bucket," he said. "There were over 300 people here to see me, including my father, whom I had not seen for a long time."

The Orangemen, who had a seven-game winning streak snapped, forced the extra period when Erich Santifer caught a deflected shot by Eddie Moss and scored at the buzzer to tie the score, 82-82.

"We had taken charge and when Danny (Schayes) and Tony (Bruin) got their fourth and fifth fouls, the game changed to who was going to make the last play," said Syracuse Coach Jim Boeheim.



Staff photo by Greg Gammon

Sophomore quarterback Jody Duch prepares to connect on a hand off with junior tailback Johnny Hector in a recent practice session.

The Aggies are in the midst of spring drills which will conclude with the Maroon-White game Saturday, April 11.

Wilson pleased with progress

By RITCHIE PRIDDY

Sports Editor
Head football coach Tom Wilson took his team through a two-hour scrimmage Wednesday afternoon for the first time since spring break.

Wilson is pleased so far with the progress of his team this spring, but admits that there are some areas that still need to be worked on.

"We had a good day," Wilson said of the scrimmage. "We saw a lot of good things out there. We also saw some bad things, too."

One big question mark facing Wilson and his staff this spring is the inconsistent play of the defense. At times, he said, the first team defense looked good but still as a way to go before he will be satisfied.

Building a strong, solid defense was one of the top goals for the Aggies going into spring practice and Wilson is looking for the people who are going to provide that.

Eight defensive starters return from last year with the linebacker position seemingly the strongest. Mike Little, Jerry Bullitt and Bobby Stroger are the mainstays at that position, returning to break havoc on opposing offenses.

The secondary seems to be in secure hands with three of the four starters returning from last year. Depth may be a problem though. Junior safety Jeff Farrar has been sidelined with torn cartilage in his knee. He is scheduled for surgery Friday but should be back at full strength shortly.

The defensive line may be a big question mark with two starters gone, but Fred Caldwell and Keith Guthrie could replace departed defensive tackles Mack Moore and Arlis James.

On the offensive side, Wilson was encouraged to see the number one unit working so well.

"Kubiak is really looking good in the number one quarterback spot. He's throwing real well and we are pleased with his progress this spring," he said.

Having switched from the power "I" formation to the split-back offense near the end of last season provides Wilson with the opportunity to take advantage of the running duo of Johnny Hector and Earnest Jackson.

Johnny Hector is running very well and we're extremely pleased with that."

The third year coach plans to use the remaining workouts as teaching sessions and scrimmages. The first two weeks were devoted to putting the base offense and defense in and finding the right positions for his players.

The team will scrimmage every Wednesday and Saturday and Wilson promises to make them very exciting.

"We'll be going with the one against one and two against two and three against three. (first team offense against the first team defense, second against second, etc.) That will make it exciting."

Saturday's scrimmage is scheduled to begin at 9 a.m.

There are 94 players currently out for the team, 49 of which have lettered for the Aggies in the past.

Eleven players are out with injuries, most with knees. However, all of them should be back at full strength by the fall.

Senior safety John Dawson is still recuperating from knee surgery that he sustained in the Ole Miss game last fall.

Offensive Coordinator Dick Rader is recuperating in St. Joseph's Hospital from an illness but should return to the team shortly.

Spring practice will conclude with the Maroon-White game, Saturday, April 11 at 7:30 p.m.

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