Bisons to learn NCAA fate today

First-round victory at Gulf South tournament likely put HU in field of 64 DII schools

RYAN COOK Sports editor

A

through they lost to Hen­
derson State on Saturday in the
semifinals of the Gulf
South Conference
Tournament, the Bisons are still in line to
earn their first berth in the NCAA
Division II Tournament.

The official announcement of in­
vited teams will be at noon today. The
selection show will be broad­
cast live via the Internet and will be
shown on the large-screen television
in the student center or in McInteer
150. Coach Jeff Morgan and the
Bisons will be there, and Morgan
said he hoped some Rhodes Row­
dees would join them.

Morgan was optimistic about
getting a bid when he talked with
the media after Saturday's 50-47

"We don't know anything offi­
cially yet, but I think this team's done
enough to get an at-large bid," he
said. "These guys deserve a shot."

Coach Jeff Morgan

The three teams that won their
conference tournaments (Hender­
son State, Florida Southern and
Morehouse) have secured auto­
matic berths in the tournament.
Rollins and Eckerd also appear to
be assured of spots out of the SSC.

That leaves three more spots for
SCG teams, probably including
Harding, Alabama-Huntsville and
Delta State.

The first three rounds make up the
South Region Tournament, which
will begin Friday at the No.
1 seed (either Rollins, just outside
Orlando, Fla.; or Henderson State,
in Arkadelphia).

It is possible the Bisons could
face HU for the fourth time this
season in the regional tournament.
That'd be fun, and I'd hope it
would be in the regional champi­
onship game," Morgan said.

The winner of the regional final,
which will be held March 17, ad­
vances to the DII Elite Eight, to be
held March 19-22 in Lakeland, Fla.

RYAN COOK Sports editor

TUPELO, MISS. — The Bisons and the Reddies could be forgiven for a sense of déjà vu. For the sec­
time in a week, Henderson
State held off a charging Harding
team for a three-point victory.

HSU won a fierce defensive
battle, 50-47, Saturday night at the
BancorpSouth Center in the Gulf
South Conference Tournament
semifinals.

The Reddies (27-4) advanced to
play East No. 1 seed Alabama­
Huntsville in Sunday's title game.
Harold fell to 21-8 and lost to HSU
for the third time this season.

"I'm so proud of our guys," coach Jeff Morgan said. "They've done an awesome job all year long.
The Lord has blessed us with some
great guys... Go to give credit to
Him... I thought we played an
awfully, awfully gaty game."

HSU scored its last point on a
Tarvoris Uzoigwe 3-pointer with
1:53 left. Carl Vault pulled the
Bisons within three points by driv­
ing the baseline for a layup with 1:31
remaining.

After Uzoigwe missed a 3-point
try with 57 left, junior Chad Ware
missed a 3-point try. Junior Darren
McCrillis nabbed the offensive
board, but Mike DeGruiy forced
the ball into the backcourt, where
the ball went out of bounds off
McCrillis with 29 left.

"Daren did what we've done
every day in practice," Morgan said.

"He's going to drive on that floor and
be the first one on it... You hate
to have that last turnover in that criti­
cal situation, but it worked out."

HSU's Kevin Schiffcre missed
the front end of a one-and-one with
25 left, but the Bisons missed a trio
of shots in the remaining seconds.

"We did a great job executing," Morgan said. "We got the three that we wanted. We had our best shoot­
ers in the game... We got a wide­
open look to the tie, and you can't ask for much more than that:

Harding took an early 10-2 lead as the Reddies missed eight of their
first nine shots.

But the Bisons made only one
field goal the rest of the half, help­
ing HSU go on a 16-0 run to take
the lead to stay. The Reddies went
on their run despite having Mike
DeGruiy on the bench with two
early fouls.

HSU led 22-15 at halftime. It was
the lowest scoring output in a half
since HU joined the NCAA in 1997.

"Even in the first half, I thought we
did a great job offensively," Morgan said. "We got some great looks. We just didn't get them to go."

The Reddies looked to run away
early in the second half, leading 27­
15 before Harding scored nine
straight to get within three points,
27-24. Jason Malek scored all seven
of his points during that run.

"I was high on our start in the second half — to come back and
close the gap and then battle the
way we did," Morgan said.

CURTIS SERIGHT / The Bisons

Seniors Carl Vault and Jason Malek pressure Henderson State's Kevin Griffin during the second half of the Reddies' semifinal victory. Malek, who turned in a double-double against North Alabama and seven points and seven rebounds against HU, was the lone Bison named to the All-Tournament team.

NCAA DII South Region Rankings

Rankings as of March 5.

1. Rollins (25-4)

Lost to Florida Southern in Southern
to Conference title game.

2. Henderson State (28-4)

Beat Florida Southern in conference
tournament with wins over Rollins, Harding and Alabama-Huntsville.

3. Florida Southern (25-6)

Beat Harding in South Region championship.

4. Eckerd (22-6)

Lost to Rollins in SSC semifinals.

5. Delta State (21-7)

Beaten by Harding in SSC tournament.

6. Southern (25-4)

Won Gulf South Conference title.

7. Harding (21-8)

Lost to Henderson State in SSC tournament after beating North Alabama in first round.

8. Ouachita Baptist (18-10)

Lost to Henderson State in SSC game after beating Loras, 80-78, and Drury, 72-65.

Rollins is the only DII school to
have a higher RPI than HSU.

RYAN COOK Sports editor

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BancorpSouth Center in the GulfSouth Conference Tournament semifinals.

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March 10, 2003

**Sports**

### March 7

**Game 1:**
- **Lincoln Memorial**
- **Delta St.**
- NCAA Tournament hopes.

**Game 2:**
- **Henderson St.**
- **Georgia**
- Georgia's 88-66 victory.

**Game 3:**
- **Harding**
- **North Alabama**
- Harding's 88-66 victory.

**Saturday, March 8**

**Game 5:**
- **UAH**
- **LMU**
- Scored nine points and grabbed seven rebounds against the Reddies after a five-steal, eight-point performance in the quarterfinals.

### March 9

**For the record:**

**Officials:**
- Jeff Faircloth
- Ted Kessler
- Kevin Clary

**Points:**
- **1st:** 11
- **2nd:** 16
- **Game:** 8

**Field goals:**
- **1st:** 55.0%
- **2nd:** 55.0%
- **Game:** 55.0%

**Finishes:**
- **1st:** 2-9 22.2%
- **2nd:** 2-9 22.2%
- **Game:** 22.2%

**Free throws:**
- **1st:** 13-13 100.0%
- **2nd:** 13-13 100.0%
- **Game:** 100.0%

** rebounds:**
- **1st:** 13
- **2nd:** 13
- **Game:** 13

**Turnovers:**
- **1st:** 13
- **2nd:** 13
- **Game:** 13

**Toulelo**
- Miss.
- The Bisons' second trip to Tupelo started a lot better than their first.

**North Alabama**
- North America
-新疆
- The Bisons led 42-27 at halftime and opened with the first six points of the second half.

**McClurll**
- Senior Brunet
- McClurll, who played 32 minutes off the bench in part because of senior Aaron Farley's foul trouble, hit a long 3-pointer to help key the run and added a 3-pointer from beyond NBA range in the second half. He finished with eight points and a team-high six assists.

**The Bisons top North Alabama in opener, 88-66**

A spark plug is the all-important thing that gets an engine started. If the Bisons are an engine, Carl Vault is the spark plug.

"I approach every game the same," Vault said. "I just play defense real well."

Understatement? Vault led the GSC in steals last season and finished second this year. He also keyed the Bisons' first NCAA postseason victory with five steals and in-your-face coverage. If Vault is in the game, his assignment is the opposing team's best scorer. His teammates appreciate the push he provides.

"They look forward to me getting out there and getting it going," Vault said. "They can tell when I'm in the zone."

For the season, Vault got the spark going.

"For the record -

**Toulelo, Miss.** - The Bisons' second trip to Tupelo started a lot better than their first.

After getting trounced in the first round of the 2002 Gulf South Conference Tournament, the Bisons were the ones doing the trouncing in an 88-66 quarterfinal victory over North Alabama Friday night at the BancorpSouth Center.

It was Harding's first postseason victory since moving up to NCAA Division II in 1997 and all but assured the Bisons of their first berth in the DII NCAA Tournament.

"It was just a great team effort," Harding coach Jeff Morgan said. "Our guys came off the bench just did an amazing job of getting us going and getting into a full-court game."

The Bisons scored the first six points of the game and only trailed once, 13-12 with 13:12 left in the first half.

"The maturity level's really high, and these guys have really done a good job of getting off to good starts throughout the year," Morgan said.

Senior Carl Vault had five steals in the first half and scored six of his eight points during a 12-0 run that all but put the game away. Two consecutive Vault layups put HU up 34-21 with 4:06 left before the half.

"He is one of the most exciting defensive players we've ever had," Morgan said.

Junior Darren McClurll, who played 32 minutes off the bench in part because of senior Aaron Farley's foul trouble, hit a long 3-pointer to help key the run and added a 3-pointer from beyond NBA range in the second half. He finished with eight points and a team-high six assists.

The Bisons had switched from a man-to-man defense to a zone defense immediately before the game-changing streak.

"We did a very poor job of attacking the zone," UNA coach Gary Elliott said. "We were making one pass and trying to do something instead of swinging the ball." The Bisons led 42-27 at halftime and opened with the first six points of the second half.

"We made a great run in the first half to finish out the half, and then we did a great job... getting it off to another good start," Morgan said. "That kind of put it away for us."

The Lions were blown away, saving a 12-0 run that pulled the Lions as close as 77-61.

"It was a very embarrassing game for us, but give Harding a lot of credit," Elliott said. "They do a lot of things well. They beat us every way you can beat a team, I think, tonight."

"Senior Chris Campbell scored a game-high 21 points on 10-of-16 shooting. Senior Jason Malak put up another double-double with 17 points and 13 boards. Other Bisons in double figures included junior Yahaya Ibrahim (14 points) and junior Chuck Ware with 11. The Bisons made 35 of 73 shots (47.9 percent) while holding UNA to 28-007 shooting (39.4 percent). The Lions made just 1 of 13 3-point shots and 9 of 22 from the free-throw line."

"We had a very poor week of practice, and I was worried after watching them on tape that we would have a hard time getting back on defense against them," Elliott said. "We have a hard time getting back against teams that really run like that (... After we started letting them [beat us down the court], that was just the difference."

UNA's high point on the stat sheet was a 52-38 rebounding edge.

"The only thing we did a half-way decent job on was getting on the boards rebounding," Elliott said.

Center Chad Jones led UNA with 18 points.

It was Elliott's last game at the helm of the Lions. He is retiring after 15 years and is UNA’s all-time leader in coaching wins. Elliott said, "I really am embarrassed in your last game," Elliott said. "I really am embarrassed as the way we played. We are a better basketball team than that."