

Runner faces hard road ahead

Amber Gay
Assistant Sports Editor

Summer Forester has two times on her watch. One is the time of day. The other is 18 minutes, 15 seconds hand-written on the face, a reminder of her goal time for the 5-kilometer run.

Forester, a University of West Florida cross country and track runner, also has the time posted on her bathroom mirror, her circuit breaker, her refrigerator and anywhere else there is room.

Training for her goal time came to a standstill Nov. 2, 2003, when she tore the anterior cruciate ligament in her right knee during an intramural flag football game.

"I was in complete denial that it was as serious as it was," said the junior recreation resort and tourism management major. "As I was lying on the field, all I kept thinking was 'you have got to be kidding me. This did not just happen. Unbelievable.'"

Forester, 20, tore her ligament two weeks prior to the regional tournament, which restricted her from competing.

Motivational messages cover her

walls. "Pain is all mental," "Light the fire within" and "If you train for second place, why race?" serve not only as motivation for winning races, but also for overcoming her injury.

"It hit me hard that I wouldn't be running track when I got back to school, and I realized that there was something huge missing from my daily life," she said. "That was practice. It is hard to be at practice and see them run while I'm there holding the stopwatch."

She had surgery on Dec. 12, 2003 to repair the torn ligament. It will be at least two to three months before Forester can begin running again.

"I guess it didn't really hit me that I was having surgery until I started going to the doctor and getting all of the paperwork and MRIs and x-rays," Forester said. "Then I was really scared because that was my knee - aka my life - that they were going to be messing around with."

She is currently attending physical therapy as well as using stationary bikes and other methods besides running to train.

"She did a good job on damaging her knee," said women's cross country and track Head Coach Dan Keely. "Summer is a good runner and a very dedicated runner. We hope to have her back for cross country next year."

Since the incident, Keely has instructed his runners, especially those on scholarships, not to participate in intramural activities during the season.

There is no policy restricting scholarship athletes from participating in intramural sports. The current policy merely states that any UWF athlete is ineligible to compete in the same intramural sport they play at a collegiate level.

"We leave it up to the individual and their coach to decide whether or not they can compete in intramurals," said Michael Bond, coordinator of intramurals and sports clubs. "We encourage everyone to play intramural sports."

Forester said the whole experience has taught her that she isn't as invincible as she thought she was.

"I never realized how crazy I was about running until I couldn't do it," Forester said. "Now I have all this free time and I miss running."



Photo by Amber Gay

Junior Summer Forester has her bedroom wall decorated with inspirational and motivational posters and writings to help her in the recovery process.

Women's basketball dominates Montevallo, shares GSC lead with West Alabama win

Andrew Kilgo
Sports Editor

The University of West Florida women's basketball team took to the road to capture their latest win this season with a 76-50 victory. They faced off against the University of Montevallo. With the win, UWF improves its Gulf South Conference record to 4-1 and 13-4 so far this season.

UWF started the game off with a bang by scoring 14 unanswered points. A side effect of this was that Montevallo never held the lead for the game. Going into halftime, UWF led 37-27, and the leading scorer forward Erin Vierling already scored 12 points against Montevallo. Opening the second half just seven minutes into the game, UWF managed to already hold a lead of more than 20 points. The UWF women stretched the lead to as much as a 32-point advantage at the 8:36 point of the second half.

Vierling continued right where she left off at halftime by scoring 9 more points and ending the night

with a team-high 21 points, and Michelle Gibson added 15 points to the victory. Melissa Nafzger made 5 steals, while Khalilah Henderson grabbed a team-high 9 rebounds. Starting point guard Clenita Jones made 5 assists.

The UWF women worked very hard on defense by limiting Montevallo to a field goal percentage of 26.7 percent, (12-for-45) while UWF was shooting 44.1 percent (30-for-68).

With the victory, the all-time rivalry record between Montevallo and UWF is 21-16 in favor of Montevallo. However, UWF women's Head Coach Shannan Bergen has a record of 8-1 versus the Falcons.

Following their commanding performance on the road against Montevallo the UWF women's basketball team returned home to what was expected to be a ferocious fight for a tie of first place in the Gulf South Conference. UWF faced off against West Alabama, who was the sole owner of first place heading into the game.

UWA's Peaches Powe scored the

first points of the game and from there on UWF dominated the first half of play. UWF took a lead of 48-21 into the halftime break. Three Argos at the half were already in double-digit scoring. Erin Vierling had 15 points and had eight rebounds, Dani Hoeffner added 13 points, and Michelle Gibson contributed 11. UWF's halftime shooting percentage was 51.2 or (21-for-41) and they held UWA to a shooting percentage of 27.3 percent or (9-for-33).

Within the opening three minutes of the second half of the game UWF increased its lead over UWA to 31 points with a score of 59-28. At this point, the UWA Tigers started to put together a run of scores that slowly chipped away at the commanding lead UWF had built.

With 11 minutes remaining in the game, the scoreboard had UWF still in the lead 65-45.

UWA again put together a run by going on a 14-4 scoring drive to shave the UWF lead to within 10 points, 69-59 at the 6:20 mark, but this time UWF would not let them advance any further.

The UWF women, with time ticking away, continued to keep ahead of the UWA scoring pace and did their part on the defensive end to help seal the victory and a tie with UWA for the GSC conference lead by defeating the UWA Tigers 85-71. Both teams top the GSC conference standings at 5-1 each, UWF improves its season record to 14-4, and UWA is now 13-5.

Vierling closed out a victorious night with a team-high 30 points, the second time that she hit the 30-point mark this season and 11th season game with 20 or more points scored. She also led the team with 11 rebounds.

Hoeffner finished the night with 17 points and six steals, Gibson had 14 points and seven rebounds, and Melissa Nafzger grabbed 10 rebounds to add to five blocked shots.

The UWF women's team, co-holders of first place in the GSC, will take to the court next Saturday Jan. 31 at the UWF Field House against Valdosta State University. The game starts at 4:30 p.m.

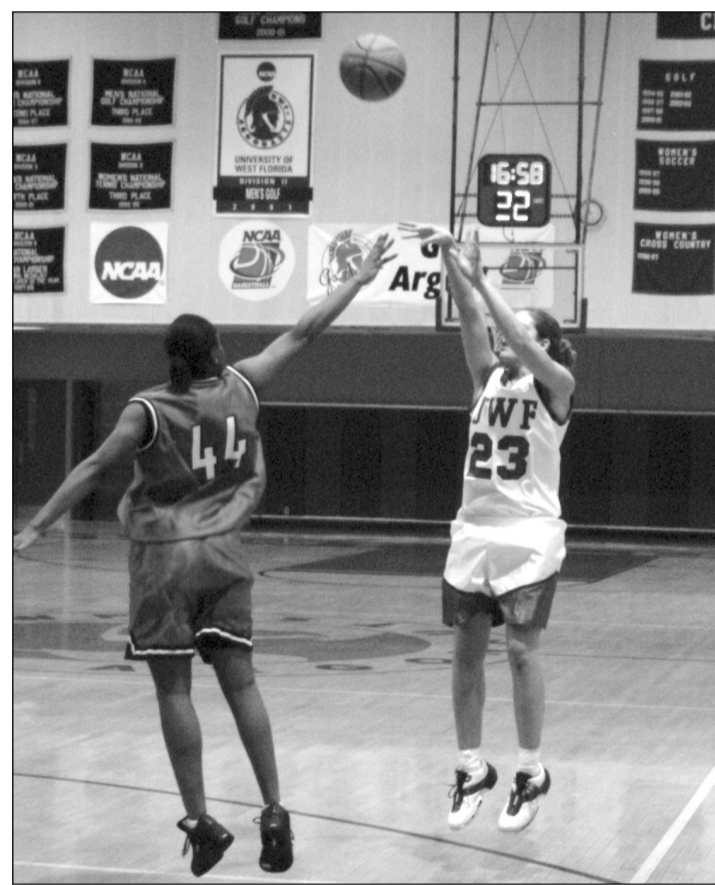


Photo by Ron Besser

UWF guard Dani Hoeffner shoots over West Alabama's Pam Brown in Monday's game. Hoeffner had a career high 17 points as UWF won 85-71.

Argos regain GSC momentum by Taming Tigers

Geoff Watts
Staff Writer

What a difference a couple of days make. The University of West Florida men's basketball team methodically took apart the University of West Alabama Tigers 83-60 Monday evening, grabbing a much-needed Gulf South Conference - East win.

Bouncing back after a dismal performance Saturday evening in Montevallo, Ala., the Argos overcame a sluggish start to put away the pesky Tigers in front of a boisterous home crowd.

"One thing about our guys is we've really responded well to losses," said Head Coach Don Hogan. "I was kind of questioning our team a little bit and where we were, but we had a great practice yesterday. You can control how hard you play and your concentration, but you can't always control whether the ball goes in."

After falling behind early, UWF star senior forward Kendrick Johnson announced his presence with authority with a one-handed follow dunk off of a missed layup, hanging in the air long

enough for the layup to come out of the basket.

Immediately following his entrance into the game, former Tate High Aggie drained three consecutive bombs from behind the arc, giving the Argos a comfortable 24-10 lead. "Being on the bench kind of does that to you, makes you want to get in there and play harder," said Love. "We had something to prove tonight."

"One good thing about Saturday's game was that the guys that came in (off the bench) played hard and really gave us a good big lift," Hogan said.

Following Love's instant offense, the Argos started pressing full-court, forcing a multitude of West Alabama turnovers resulting in several key transition baskets to take a 41-23 lead at halftime.

"I think it kind of took them out of their rhythm a little bit," Hogan said. "You always know that the (other) team is going to come back, but its great to have that cushion."

That cushion soon started to become uncomfortable as the Tigers, behind some lethargic UWF play and hot three point shooting managed to

hang around — eventually whittling the Argo lead to a manageable seven points.

It wasn't long however, before the Argos responded.

After a timeout at 9:45 in the second half, UWF got back into their press and half-court trap, immediately forcing a steal and two-shot opportunity for Kendrick Johnson at the line. On the ensuing possession, sophomore guard Matt Shemwell's steal led to a virtuoso finger-roll off the glass by Johnson.

The following West Alabama possession led to another Argo pifer, with the pass ahead to Kendrick Johnson, taking off from 3 feet inside the foul line, for a flying "Jordanesque" one hand flush for the loudest ovation of the evening. Getting back to his old ways, Johnson led the Argos on the night with 18 points and 10 rebounds.

"We got to the free-throw line and we called a press and got a steal and got a basket," Hogan said.

"As a rule, if you get a steal off of a press, you're right back into the press, and what had become a seven

point game was over."

Now forced into taking ill-advised threes, West Alabama failed to convert and put the Argos on the free-throw line to stop the dwindling clock.

The Argos, shooting an abysmal 58.6 percent from the line on the season, shot 17-21 in the second half, 21-25 overall from the stripe, slamming the door on any Tiger hopes for a comeback.

The 81-60 final sent Argo supporters home happy.

"I thought we had good focus, good concentration, and protected the basketball well," Hogan said. "I'm happy with our effort and the way things went."

Next up for the Argos is a non-conference game with the Oakwood College Ambassadors, Thursday evening, Jan. 29 at 7:30 p.m. before clashing with GSC - East leader Valdosta State on Saturday afternoon at 2:30 p.m.

"I know Valdosta from seasons past," Hogan said. "They're very, very good defensively. The name of the game is protecting the ball and getting good shots."



Photo by Jeff Meffert

UWF's Kashif Russell jams home a rebound against the University of West Alabama.

Argo Coaches Catch Awards

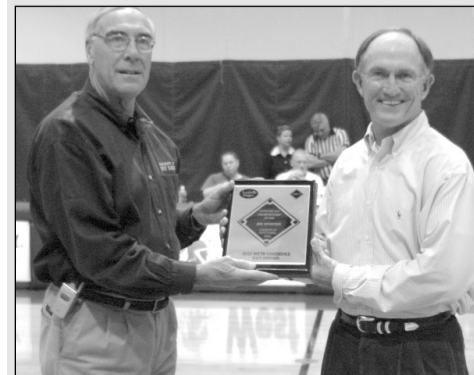


Photo by Ron Besser

UWF Baseball Coach Jim Spooner, right, accepts the awards from UWF Athletic Director Richard Berg for the Best ERA in the GSC and for winning the GSC-East last season.



Photo by Ron Besser

Berg presents the Softball Regional Coach of the Year Award to Coach Tami Cyr, center; Assistant Cindie Corey, right; and trainer Kelley Henderson.

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