

Mission Accomplished

■ Lady Rebels take state with convincing 57-44 win over Warrior

By Colin Merritt
The Choctaw Sun

MONTGOMERY — The South Choctaw Lady Rebels had just one goal this basketball season: win state. On Thursday night in Montgomery it was mission accomplished.

South Choctaw culminated their spectacular 23-6 season with another emphatic win, beating Warrior Academy, 57-44, to claim the AISA Class A state title. The double-digit win capped a dominating playoff run in which the Lady Rebels never trailed.

"We peaked at the right time," said Coach Charlie Taylor of his Rebels, who finished the season on an 11-game winning streak and blasted opponenets by an average of 25 points in their five-game playoff run. "Everthing fell into place for us this year. I'm just so proud of all of these girls, especially the seniors."

Seniors Kate Dahlberg, Arielle Campbell, Bridget Kwasniak, Trystan Mosley, Lauren Jackson, Randi Arrington and Holli Cornett were the main components during the Rebels championship run.

The Rebels rolled through Warrior in the championship game much like they had other playoff opponenets. Up just 4-2 in

the game's opening minutes, a Trystan Mosley 3-pointer would basically put the Rebels up for good.

Warrior (20-4) only got close at the end of the first period when they cut the gap to 13-9. But a subsequent 13-0 Rebel run to end the first and start the second would send the game to halftime with SCA in control of the game, 38-19. The Rebels would win a low-scoring third, 6-5, on their way to the 13 point win.

Arielle Campbell's 18 points led South Choctaw in the title game. Kate Dahlberg was next on the Rebels with 10 points, with Cortney Mozingo scoring eight and Koen Lindsey adding six on two 3-pointers. Keshara Moore led Warrior with 28 points and 15 rebounds.

Although Dahlberg was just 4-of-16 from the field in the final, she did manage an amazing seven rebounds, seven steals and seven assist to earn Tournament-MVP honors. Campbell and Bridget Kwasniak made the All-Tournament team for South Choctaw, along with Autagua's Mary Beth Durbin, Crenshaw's Chelsea Petry, Warrior's Tricia Langham and Keshara Moore.

The state championship is South Choctaw Academy's second AISA title in girls basketball. The first was in 1995.



Choctaw Sun photo by Dee Ann Campbell

The 2006-07 State Champion South Choctaw Lady Rebels are (bottom row l-r) Bridget Kwasniak (All-Tournament), Kate Dahlberg (Tournament MVP), Arielle Campbell (All-Tournament), Randi Arrington, Lauren Jackson, Trystan Mosley, (back row) Cortney Mozingo, Kourtney Hubbard, Evelyn Todd, Holli Cornett, Cierra Giles, Tanner Johnson and Koen Lindsey. See pages 4B and 5B for more photos from the State Championship game!

23-6
Overall

The Journey

16-0
Class A

Game-by-game account of the 2006-07 South Choctaw Lady Rebels' run to the AISA Class A State Championship

Coach Charlie Taylor is notorious for putting his teams through the ringer to get them ready for the postseason. Last year, for example, his Lady Rebels got off to a so-so 3-5 start because they were playing bigger schools. The increased competition paid off, however, when the team made it to the Class 2A Final Four and came within three points of beating Kingwood to go to the championship game.

The same blueprint was used this year. The now Class 1A Rebels started 4-4 while playing on the road in tournaments hosted by teams like Class 2A champ Kingwood and perennial Mississippi contender Lamar. The girls took some lumps in a couple of those games, but the lessons learned served them well as they finished the year on an 18-2 winning streak and then demolished the competition in the playoffs on their journey to the title:

(1-0) South Choctaw 71, Open Door 38

This blowout against an in-class opponent was a sign of things to come. SCA actually led 52-9 at the half before calling off the dogs. It was also an indication of the kind of season senior Kate Dahlberg was going to have. Kate scored 11 points, but more impressively had seven assist, six rebounds and five steals while playing mostly just the first half. Junior Koen Lindsey also had 11.

(2-0) South Choctaw 53, Warrior 34

At the time no one knew this was the championship preview. The Rebels looked good in handling the Lady Braves on the road, jumping out to a 30-17 halftime lead. Kate led the team with 15 points, Trystan Mosley had 12 and Arielle Campbell added 11.

(3-0) South Choctaw 57, Marengo 27

The Rebels took an amazing 37-9 halftime lead over Class 2A Marengo in Linden. Kate had all 15 of her points in the first half. Almost all of the Rebels scored in this one, including Tanner Johnson, Holli Cornett and Cierra Giles.

(3-1) South Choctaw 40, Patrician 41

The Rebels would rally and almost win this one from their Highway 17 rival after trailing 14-2 at the end of one in Butler. After taking the lead late in the fourth, Patrician drained four straight free throws to take the one-point lead with just seconds remaining.

On the ensuing possession, South Choctaw would actually get fouled while trying a desperation shot. However, neither free throw found it's mark and the Rebels were handed their first loss. Dahlberg hit 21 points and six rebounds and senior Arielle Campbell scored ten.

(4-1) South Choctaw 50, Lamar 45

The Rebels beat host squad Lamar to salvage a game in the Meridian tourney thanks to a 25-point effort from Kate Dahlberg. The senior also hit 8-of-10 free



South Choctaw coach Charlie Taylor enjoys the moment after his Rebels wrapped up a 23-6 season with a state championship. The Rebels never lost to an in-class opponents (16-0) and only trailed once (15-8 to Sumter in the area final).

throws down the stretch to hold off a late Lamar rally. Senior Bridget Kwasniak scored seven and junior Cortney Mozingo had six for SCA.

(4-2) South Choctaw 39, East Rankin 56

The loss to East Rankin, a Class 3A team in the basketball rich Mississippi Private School Association, in the opener of the Lamar Holiday Tournament was due to a slow start offensively and a lack of rebounding off those missed shots. After trailing 28-5 to start and pulling down just 11 rebounds all game, this one was over quick. Koen Lindsey's 14 points paced SCA.

(4-3) South Choctaw 28, Oak Hill 57

Showing fatigue from having played East Rankin that morning, the Rebels fell behind big again, 23-6, in the first period in the afternoon game. Despite four 3-pointers and 19 points from Dahlberg, the

back-to-back games were too much and the Rebels suffered what would be their worst loss of the year.

(4-4) South Choctaw 45, Bessemer 53

Things didn't get any easier at the Kingwood Tournament when SCA had to match up with Class 3A Bessemer in round-one. However, the underdog Rebels were set to shock Bessemer, leading 35-32 at the half, until a 21-10 fourth period ended the upset attempt. Dahlberg led the scoring again with 17 points, she also grabbed nine rebounds, made four blocks and grabbed three steals. Kwasniak scored nine with four assist and three steals, and senior Lauren Jackson scored seven with nine boards.

(5-4) South Choctaw 46, Garywood 15

The girls took out some frustrations after losing four of their last six games by annihilating Garywood to close out the Kingwood tourney. The Rebels jumped out to a 35-4 lead and never looked back. Kate had 17 points and four steals, Arielle had nine point and six boards, and Lauren Jackson scored seven with nine rebounds.

(6-4) South Choctaw 72, Marengo 39

The Rebels made short work of Class 2A Marengo in their own holiday tournament, thanks to a 44-20 halftime lead where Kate and Kwasniak hit 18 and 10 respectively. Kate finished with 20 and Kwasniak with 12 with neither seeing much second half action.

(6-5) South Choctaw 38, Patrician 49

After holding a 33-30 lead in the third period of the tourney title game, the Lady Rebels fell apart in the fourth period allowing Patrician a 14-3 run. Kate and Arielle led the Rebels with nine points each, while senior Trystan Mosley scored seven.

(7-5) South Choctaw 69, West Ala. Prep 19

The first of three such whippings the Rebels would hang on area opponent WAP. Believe it or not, this one isn't the worst. Arielle had 14, Kate 12, and Koen 10.

(8-5) South Choctaw 53, Wayne 27

Kate Dahlberg's 16 points led the way in this easy win. Arielle had 13, while Trystan and Kwasniak had eight each.

(9-5) South Choctaw 65, Sumter 41

The Rebels moved to 3-0 in area play with this win where they started on a 30-2 run. Dahlberg finished with a great line of stats: 16 points, seven assist, four rebounds and two steals. Arielle also dominated with 14 points, six steals and five rebounds, while Kwasniak had 11 points, four assist and four steals. Lindsey had nine and junior Cortney Mozingo had five and five boards.

■ see JOURNEY on 3B