

Choctaw finished after near miss in OT

Tigers erase double-digit deficit in final period only to fall in overtime at Montgomery Academy

By Colin Merritt
The Choctaw Sun

MONTGOMERY — All season long, fouls have gotten the Tigers into trouble. Friday night was no exception. An amazing 37 fouls were the culprit in Choctaw County' season-ending, 76-73, loss to Montgomery Academy in the Class 3A sub-regional.

Tigers
73

MA
76

"It's just so disheartening," Thomas said of the foul discrepancy that saw MA enter the bonus midway through the first and five of his Tigers foul out by game's end. "They won't let us play our game. They called every little tic-tac foul on us, but Montgomery had their way. They hacked us and tripped us all night." Montgomery Academy was whistled just 16 times in the game to CCHS's 36.

Even though foul problems saw the Tigers trail from the outset, they would still manage to tie the game when Charles Ruffin hit a 12-foot jumper with

just seconds remaining. Once in overtime, Montgomery would score six of their eight points from the free throw line to take the three-point win.

"If two or three calls go the other way, we win that one," bemoaned Thomas, who said that MA shot 11 free throws in the decisive overtime period, while the Tigers had just three shots from the foul line.

The Tigers actually trailed by six early in the extra session, until a 3-point basket from Ruffin with less than :30 to go pulled them to within one. MA would make two more free throws on the next possession only to see Ruffin convert again and pull the Tigers to within one with :05 left. However, an intentional foul was called on CCHS on the inbound pass, denying the Tigers a chance to get the ball back and basically ending the game.

"That was typical of the night," finished a disgusted Thomas. "We should of at least had a shot for the win, but they took that from us too with the intentional foul." Choctaw County finished the season 17-11.

Senior Charles Ruffin led CCHS with 24 points and classmate Chris 'Sweetpea' Carter added 20 with nine rebounds. Senior Bryan Winston hit eight points for the Tigers.

Indians done in by Pickens, again

■ Pickens County ends Southern Choctaw basketball season in sub-regional

REFORM — It happened in football, and now basketball.

Pickens County ended Southern Choctaw's season on Friday night with a 59-39 win in the Class 2A sub-region playoffs.

The Indians never led in the sub-region playoff game, finishing their basketball season with a 16-8 record.

Southern Choctaw also lost to Pickens, 20-0, in Reform in the first round of the football playoffs earlier this year.

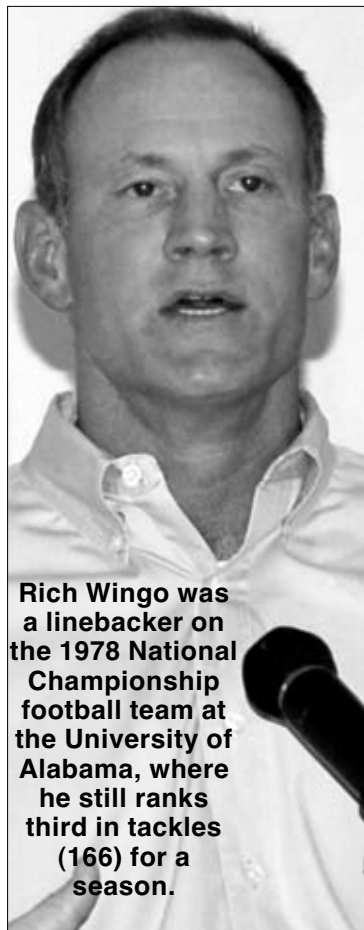
Indians
39

Pickens
59

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Former Tide star speaks at GBC

By Marcus Gates
The Choctaw Sun



Rich Wingo was a linebacker on the 1978 National Championship football team at the University of Alabama, where he still ranks third in tackles (166) for a season.

Choctaw Sun photo by Marcus Gates

GILBERTTOWN -- The Wild Game Supper at Gilberttown Baptist Church had a lot to offer to those who came Saturday night. There were many door prizes donated by local merchants and lots of food for the more than 190 people that attended. There was pork, turkey, fish, duck, rabbit, quail, and many side dishes to add to the meal.

The Cullomburg Quartet was the singing quest that performed before the meal.

The main event was Guest Speaker Rich Wingo, former University of Alabama and Green Bay Packer football player. Wingo was a member of the 1978 National Championship Football team at Alabama that stopped Penn State at the goal line to win 14-7. He was part of the famed 'Goal Line Stand' that stopped Penn St. on four straight downs inside the one yard line.

"They have unbelievable facilities," Wingo said of today's Alabama team. "I am proud of the program and I wish the best for Coach Saban. My son Jake played football there for two years and is now a graduate assistant in the weight room as a strength and conditioning coach."

Following his years with the Crimson Tide, Wingo went on to play

eight years for the Green Bay Packers. He still holds the record for the 'Most Total Tackles-Season, Rookie (1975-2006) 166 tackles 1979' and the 'Most Unassisted Tackles, Season (1975-2006) 151 tackles 1979.' His record of 166 tackles still ranks third on the overall list for a season from (1975-2006).

During Saturday night's dinner, Wingo told a couple of Coach 'Bear' Bryant stories and talked about his faith, focusing on the trials and tribulations he has been through and how God has pulled him through.

"When someone ask your son who the most Godly person in their life, if they do not say that their father is, then something is wrong with the way you are living," Wingo addressed the fathers in attendance at the dinner. "All fathers should be the most Godly person in their childrens lives."

Wingo now works in Birmingham with AIG Banker which develops shopping centers. The company is currently in the process of constructing the 'Wharf' in Orange Beach.

He ended the evening by greeting some of the Crimson Tide fans in attendance, including several youth from local schools. He posed for pictures with Daniel and Rodney Grice of South Choctaw Academy and Crimson Lewis from Southern Choctaw High School.

Dixie Bowmaster shoot this Saturday

GILBERTTOWN -- The Dixie Bowmasters will hold a multi-round bow shoot this Saturday, February 24th.

The shoot will be held at the Gilberttown Bow Range located on the Barrytown Road and will boast three divisions:

youth, hunter and open class.

The shoot is scheduled for 8 a.m. to 2 p.m. and the cost is \$7 per round.

For more information call Mark Williams (251) 843-2725 or Stan Boggs (251) 843-5883.

We still have deer pictures. More to come next issue!

Congratulations, Kate

We're Proud of You!

Uncle Paul, Anthony, Melanie, Farish, Dalton, Victoria, Stephanie and Robert Uncle Levi and Carlene

Tournament MVP
Sun Player of the Year
AISA All-Star

From Start to Finish: The building of a Championship

By Colin Merritt
The Choctaw Sun

State championships don't just happen. They are grown. They start when kids are in junior high, not high school.

Ask any title winning coach at the varsity level and they will tell you that they could see it coming from a long way off. A good coach knows when he gets a young group that is destined to be special.

Charlie Taylor is a good coach. And when he saw a gangly bunch of 8th grade girls stumble into his gym at South Choctaw some five years ago, he knew something special was imminent.

"I knew the talent was there," Taylor reminisced of the first time he saw the group of girls that would soon blossom into a state champion. "They were green at first, but I knew that as a group they could turn into something special."

Starting with the core group of Kate Dahlberg, Arielle Campbell, Bridget Kwasniak, Trystan Mosley, Lauren Jackson, Randi Arrington and Holli Cornett, Taylor began to mold the makings of a champion.

He practiced relentlessly on the basics in those early years. He taught dribbling, passing, position, shooting, you name it, Taylor taught it.

The countless hours of practice would come to fruition all too soon for these young Rebels as most of them were pressed into playing time on the varsity level at an early age.

"When they were eighth and ninth graders, most of them were getting plenty of time on the varsity," Taylor continued, thinking back to the 2002 season when his team took some lumps with the youngsters. "We got beat pretty bad in some of those games. I guess you could say it was a baptism by fire, but it paid off."

One of the keys about this championship senior class, according to Taylor,



Kate Dahlberg



Randi Arrington



Trystan Mosley

is that the entire starting lineup came out of it. "It's always been this group that has been the core of Rebel basketball for the last four years," boasted Taylor of the Class of 2007 hoopsters. "Others came and went, but this was the main group. They delivered on all of their potential too. That's what makes this so special. They set out to win it this year and they did it!"

Here are some thoughts Taylor had on each of his graduating seniors:

Kate Dahlberg
"We pressed Kate into a leadership role at an early age. She not only turned out to be one of the best leaders we've ever had, but she has to be considered one of the best girls' basketball players to ever come through South Choctaw."

Arielle Campbell
"Arielle came so far in the last five years. For awhile, I didn't know what to do with her, then all of the sudden she became one of the more dominant post players in all of the AISA."

Bridget Kwasniak
"The grittiest player I've ever coached. The best one-on-one defender I've ever coached. She turned out to be the quarterback of this basketball team. Without Bridget, we just wouldn't have been as good in our full-court-press on in our half-court offense."

Trystan Mosley
"She has one of the quickest releases around. Without Trystan hitting threes on the backside,



Bridget Kwasniak



Lauren Jackson

opponents could have double-teamed our post players. When she is on, it's really tough to beat us."

Lauren Jackson
"Lauren is our physical presence. She is a great defender in the post and a tremendous rebounder. After 32 minutes of having Lauren defend you, you know you've been in a war."

Randi Arrington
"Any other year, Randi is our star player. She is an unbelievable defender and can shoot the three. We could have tripled her minutes and we still would have won state. She might be the best 'sixth man' is all of the AISA."

Holli Cornett
"Holli is one of our most unselfish players. We actually switched her this year from the guard spot she had played since junior high and put her in the post where we needed more depth. She never complained and got better at her new position with each practice."

Congratulations Holli Cornett

Lady Rebels AISA Class 1A Champions

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