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Presto & company wrestle way to third-straight win

Rock, 3-1, off to best start since 2004-05 season

By Josh Rizzo
Rocket Contributor

Seven months ago, the Slippery Rock women's basketball team lost to the Clarion Golden Eagles to end the season at 9-17 overall with a 3-9 record in the Pennsylvania Athletic Conference's West Division.

The team ended the season on a four-game losing streak, but had kept most of their games competitive until the end.

The Rock had dropped four conference match-ups by three points or less.

Coach Laurel Heilman was unsure of why the team had trouble closing out games last season.

"We seemed to lack the composure and poise to make the plays we needed to make when the game was on the line," Heilman said.

Flash forward to the start of the 2007-08 season, during which the Rock's luck has begun to turn around.

After splitting the season's first two contests, SRU (3-1) was matched up with Fairmont State (2-1) for the Rock's home opener.

The FSU-SRU game ended up turning into a barnburner.

After having a double-digit lead for most of the game, SRU fell apart down the stretch.

Though they led 51-41 with just over seven



Rock guard Nikki Presto gets tied up with Mercyhurst guards Samantha Loadman (left) and Paris Pugliese in a scrum for possession of the ball. Presto, a sophomore, scored nine points while pulling down a team-high six rebounds in Monday night's 71-61 victory. The Rock has won three in a row since its season-opening loss to Pitt-Johnstown.

NATE DAYMUT/THE ROCKET

minutes to play, the Rock could do nothing to stop FSU's momentum.

FSU tied the game with a three-pointer with 11 seconds left, setting up the wild finish.

Thankfully for the Rock, junior guard Chere' Marshall stepped up in the clutch, and with a little luck, led the Rock to victory.

It looked like the game

was headed to overtime when Marshall mishandled a pass.

The ball rolled to half court, where Marshall frantically scrambled to pick it up before time expired.

Marshall nailed the game-winning trey just in front of the inside half court to give SRU the 61-58 victory.

The Rock used the same formula for victory when it

went up against Mercyhurst (1-4) on Tuesday night at Morrow Field House.

The Rock jumped out to a big lead, but slowly allowed Mercyhurst to climb back into the game.

"Part of closing out games comes with experience and playing in situations like that," said senior forward KellyAnn Staudinger.

"We go over things

like that in practice and we work on different situations and that helps. Ultimately however, it comes down to experience and composure."

The Rock never trailed in the game and was led by Staudinger and sophomore guard Julie Molloy, who both scored 16 points in the 61-51 victory.

The result against

Mercyhurst was the second straight game in which the Rock had built a double-digit lead and allowed its opponent to come back.

While the Rock won both games, giving up big leads could be a problem down the road, Heilman said.

"Our biggest problem is once we build sizable leads, we are not matching baskets with the other team," Heilman said. "We are a small team. We have had problems rebounding, which have helped the other team build leads to make runs at us."

The 3-1 start is the best for Heilman's squad since they started the 2004-05 season at 4-1.

"A major difference from this year to last year is our work ethic," Staudinger said.

"We are all striving for the same goal and working together to achieve that goal. But the work ethic is defiantly a big reason why we are 3-1."

The Rock's next two games will be on the road against teams from the East Division, as they take on West Chester and Millersville in this weekend's PSAC crossover games.

Both teams are currently undefeated. Millersville stands a 5-0, while the Golden Rams carry a 4-0 mark into the contest.

The Rock's game at West Chester is set to tip-off at 1 p.m. on Saturday.

Men's basketball nets first win of season in Gary Miller Classic, tops Roberts Wesleyan

By Phil Swartzlander
Rocket Assistant Sports Editor

Head Coach Jamal Palmer wanted his team to be 3-0 going into PSAC crossover games this weekend.

But poor shooting from the foul line led the men's basketball team to a 1-2 record, with its only success coming in an 84-79 win over Roberts Wesleyan last Saturday.

The win over Roberts Wesleyan gave the Rock a third-place finish in the Gary Miller Classic hosted by Gannon University.

In the game, both SRU and Roberts Wesleyan used several stretches to increase their leads.

The Rock put together a 17-2 run in the first half to propel itself to a 29-15 lead. Roberts Wesleyan came roaring back with a 21-7 run of its own to tie the game just before halftime.

The Rock took the lead just before the half, however, and never looked back.

They used two stretches of nine unanswered points in the second half to keep the Raiders at bay.

"It was important for us to at least come away from the tournament with one win. We wanted to at least go 1-1 on the weekend, which we

did," Palmer said.

Darnell Johnson led the way for the Rock, scoring 25 points while adding four rebounds and four assists.

Jamar Scales, the team's leading scorer during the '06-'07 campaign, added 19 points while Ken Ottrix scored 13 off the bench.

The Rock came into the game with just nine healthy players, as several have been sidelined by early-season injuries.

Freshman Itay Levi has a bulging disk in his back and was only recently cleared to play.

Redshirt freshman Jade Burka broke his nose early in the first half against Roberts Wesleyan and junior Matt Schafer has a foot injury.

"We have been getting banged up. We haven't been full-power since the first exhibition versus St. Bonaventure," Palmer said.

Levi should return to the lineup by the time conference play starts, Palmer said.

SRU lost the opening game of the tourney to Point Park University last Friday by a 94-70 margin.

Point Park led by 10 at halftime and used a 26-6 surge in the second half to put the Rock away.



JED MILLIRON/THE ROCKET

Junior Erroll Robinson goes hard to the basket during the Rock's season-opening 62-58 loss to Mercyhurst. Robinson had 10 points in the defeat.

Erroll Robinson was the top scorer on the night with 22 points and Burka pulled down nine rebounds for the Rock.

"We wanted to get the win against Point Park, but they

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Dolphins, drunks & dummies: Things that boil my blood



BRANDON
FOX

From The Cheap Seats

First off, let me start by saying that my thoughts and prayers go out to the family of Washington Redskins safety Sean Taylor.

It is a terrible loss for the NFL and football in general. Taylor was always one of my favorite players, and I can't imagine what his teammates and family are going through, especially his 1-year-old daughter.

He will certainly be missed.

I was thinking about a lot of things for this week, and I just couldn't narrow it down to one, so I am going to talk about a plethora of topics. Here we go.

Miami Dolphins- Hey everybody: They are 0-11. They are the worst team in

the NFL, right?

Well maybe their record says they are, but they aren't (and I am not saying that because they are my favorite team).

They have lost six games by three points or less. If one or two things had gone the Dolphins way, they could be 6-5.

But they are not.

They make too many mistakes. Dropped passes, shanked punts, costly penalties and turnovers. All reasons why they are 0-11.

It also doesn't help that they lost their starting quarterback (Trent Green), running back (Ronnie Brown, who was having

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