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NATE DAYMUT/THE ROCKET

Junior Darnell Johnson takes a jumper in Wednesday's 77-64 home loss to California U. of Pa. Johnson scored 20 points and logged 36 of a possible 40 minutes for a Rock squad that was playing without center Ken Ottrix, who left the team for personal reasons.

Rock digs early grave in double-digit loss to Vulcans

By Phil Swartzlander
Rocket Assistant Sports Editor

The Slippery Rock men's basketball team was soundly defeated by the PSAC-West leading California University of Pennsylvania Vulcans by a 77-64 margin at Morrow Field House on Wednesday night.

With the loss, the Rock dropped to 3-15 overall and 1-3 in the PSAC-West.

The skill and athleticism of the Vulcans showed as they never allowed a Rock lead and were ahead by as much as 20 points.

"They came out and got it done tonight," Rock Head Coach Jamal Palmer said. "They are a good team with a real good coach."

The Rock came out sluggish

after a week off from the competitive PSAC schedule, allowing Cal to dominate at both ends of the court. Cal forced seven turnovers in the first 10 minutes of play en route to an early 16-point lead, 20-4.

"I will give it to Cal, they played hard, but we could have given a better effort," junior guard Darnell Johnson said. "They have a real team defense, but we will see how it turns out next time around."

For the remainder of the first half, both teams traded baskets as the Rock slowly cut the lead to 28-19.

Cal scored 12 points off sloppy turnovers in the first half, which helped the Vulcan effort.

There was more of the same in the second half as Cal stayed

hot from the floor, going 15-for-26 (58 percent). The Rock managed to closely match the Cal effort, connecting on 57 percent of its shots, but could not gain any ground.

"We talked about coming out hard and stop playing like little boys and start playing like men, but Cal still got what they wanted," Palmer said.

The Rock trailed by 20 with nine minutes to go and wouldn't get closer than 12 again.

The Vulcans were paced by a huge night from Alioune Mbaye, who scored 29 points, 19 of them in the second half, while adding 10 rebounds. Julian Logan and Ron Banks added 12 points each.

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Rock women bullied in 26-point loss to Cal

By Josh Rizzo
Rocket Contributor

Coming into the 2007-08 season, the members of the women's basketball team knew there would be some bumps along the way.

But since an early three-game winning streak, the road hasn't only gotten bumpier, it has begun to crumble beneath them.

Already dealing with the well-known and unwelcome injury bug, and coming off a tough loss at rival IUP, the Rock attempted to steal one from visiting California University of Pennsylvania.

Instead, the Rock hit another pothole. SRU dropped to 7-13 overall and 1-3 in the Pennsylvania State Athletic Conference West with a 83-57 drubbing at the hands of the Vulcans on Wednesday night at Morrow Field House. The Vulcans (17-2, 4-0) lead the PSAC in a number of categories.

They have the best scoring offense, margin of victory and steals, and it showed Wednesday night.

"Cal's trapping is relentless," Rock Coach Laurel Heilman said. "Whenever their guards trap, it is very difficult to find open players."

From the opening tip, the game was an all-out war.

The Vulcans' physical play on defense combined with the relatively few calls made by the referees threw the young Rock squad off its game.

After having her hands held after a rebound, SRU senior Nijha McNeely began jawing at a California player when they were running back down the court.

During the conversation, the referee handed McNeely a technical foul and the downward spiral began.

"Cal's physical play on defense threw us off early on, and getting into a shouting match only made it worse," senior KellyAnn Staudinger said. "We also gave up too many opportunities to score, which definitely hurt us."

Staudinger had a team-high 17 points

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SAMANTHA CHALMERS/THE ROCKET

Sophomore post Colleen Smith, who scored six points in 11 minutes of play, sets the offense in Wednesday night's 83-57 loss to California U. of Pa. at Morrow Field House. With the loss, the Rock fell to 7-12 overall and 1-3 in the PSAC West.

Adam Jones sets school weight toss record at Bison Open

By Andy Barlow
Rocket Contributor

A weekend trip across the state to Bucknell University proved to be a successful one for the SRU indoor track and field team.

At the Bison Open in Lewisburg, Pa., several athletes won events for the Rock, including Adam Jones in the 35-pound weight toss, James Sims in the 400-meter dash, Jennifer Hansen in the pole vault and Whitney Henderson in the

high jump.

Jones, a senior, set a school record with his effort, a throw of 57 feet, 2 inches.

"Breaking the record was definitely one of my goals for the year, and to do it this early in the season is a relief," Jones said.

With his toss, Jones earned a berth in the NCAA Division II National Championships in Boston. Prior to that, however, there are four more meets, including the PSAC Championships.

Therefore, the senior will have

four more opportunities to further improve before nationals.

But for future Rock track and field athletes, breaking the weight toss record may be an even more difficult feat to accomplish.

"I believe that I can break the record again with the help of my throws coach, Meagan Cook," he said. "And with all the extra work that I will continue to put in, it will help me to perform better."

Also victorious at the meet were Serena Bond in the triple jump and Lacey Cochran in the 400-

meter dash, while the men's and women's 4x400-meter dash relay teams finished first as well.

Head Coach John Papa said he was very pleased with the individual efforts, as well as the overall team effort.

This is with good reason, as SRU continues to lead the way in the PSAC for track and field.

"I love coaching at SRU," Papa said. "We have so many hard-working and dedicated athletes in our program. I am proud to watch them compete."

Slippery Rock students and supporters have the opportunity to see the team compete on Feb. 8 in Morrow Field House when the university hosts the SRU Open.

Before that, though, the men's team will be in action at the West Virginia Invitational in Morgantown, W. Va.

The women's team will be competing at the Akron Open in Ohio. Both events will take place tomorrow.