



LOGAN, Utah – A landmark season for the Mercer men's basketball team resulted in the CollegeInsider.com Tournament Championship, earned in a hard-fought 70-67 win at Utah State on Wednesday night. Mercer's victory secured the team's spot in history as the Atlantic Sun Conference's first team to capture a postseason crown.

Junior Travis Smith booked a career-high 17 points in the win, while sophomore Langston Hall added 16. Sophomore Bud Thomas notched his second straight game in double figures with 10 points.

"We were close as a team and we have stayed in a tight circle all year," Mercer head coach Bob Hoffman said. "Being on the road together in our last three wins has united us even further and solidified what these young guys believed they could do anywhere, in any place and against any odds. That is what we were able to accomplish, and it has been an unbelievable experience for our fans and our community. It is just a blessing to be a part of something this special, and we thank everyone who was a part of it."

Mercer closed its dream season with a 27-11 record while Utah State finished at 21-16. The Bears' 27th win of the season defied all odds, as the Bears were tasked with erasing a late deficit in one of college basketball's toughest venues.

Entering Wednesday night's final, the Aggies had posted wins in 100 of their last 106 games at the Dee Glen Smith Spectrum - its on-campus facility renown for ear-splitting capacity crowds. Wednesday night's following was true to form as its crowd of 6,154 consisted largely of students packed to the rafters.

A brilliant first half effort saw Mercer neutralize the crowd and take a 31-22 lead into the break, but the second half had the Bears' biggest challenge of the season in store.

Out of the locker room, Mercer seemed to have control as the lead moved to 38-28 with 17:29 to play. As expected, Utah State refused to back down and mounted a 9-2 charge to close within three.

Behind the support of a reengaged crowd, the Aggies mounted numerous attacks at the deficit. Ultimately, the hosts would go in front at the 5:39 juncture on a breakaway dunk by Kyisean Reed.

Reed's slam put the Aggies on top for the first time in over 30 minutes of game time.

The Aggies pushed their lead to as many as six, but Jakob Gollon drilled a pair of free throws and Thomas canned a clutch triple to bring Mercer back within one (55-54) with 3:45 remaining.

After trading scores, the Bears ultimately took the lead for good on a driving layup from Hall with 2:16 remaining. From that point on, the Aggies had four chances to either tie or take the lead denied.

Down the stretch, Mercer hit seven of its last eight free throws to preserve the win.

The 2011-12 season saw the Bears rewrite the record books, notching multiple conference and program records.

As a team, the Bears set program standards in wins (27), points scored (2,589) and blocks (180). Sophomore Daniel Coursey finished as the school's single-season block leader, with 88 rejections to his credit.

The team also finished among the program's single-season leaders in three-point field goals made (2nd – 264), three-point field goals attempted (2nd – 730), three-point field goal percentage (7th – 36.2%), free throw percentage (T-2nd, 71.9%), assists (2nd – 519) and steals (3rd – 259).

Individuals with program top-10 season totals include Coursey, Gollon, Smith, Hall, and senior Justin Cecil. Coursey's 62% field goal percentage ranks second all-time. Gollon's free throw accuracy (82.9%) ranks fifth.

Cecil's 82 three pointers made and 226 threes attempted both rank fourth all-time, while Hall's 69 triples made is fifth. Hall also cracked the top-10 in assists (160 – 4th).

Smith hit 82.1% of his charity tosses, slotting him eighth on the single-season charts.

Mercer's triumph was Hoffman's 75th in four years with the Bears, equaling a program-best win total over a four-year period. The Bears also had 75 wins from 1949-53 and 1950-54.

ALL-TOURNAMENT TEAM

Pane Brockeith Utah State

Justin Cecil, Mercer

Morgan Grim, Utah State

Langston Hall, Mercer

Reggie Hamilton, Oakland

Preston Medlin Utah State

Travis Smith, Mercer

MOST VALUABLE PLAYER: Langston Hall