

Hawkeyes out in first round

Northwestern State tops Iowa with last-second 3-point shot

By LARRY LAGE
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

AUBURN HILLS, Mich. Jermaine Wallace might've had the worst view of the swish seen 'round the nation.

Stuck in the corner with time running out, all Wallace could do was heave, hope and watch.

As he fell below the baseline, his fadeaway 3-point shot was good with a split second left, and little Northwestern State pulled off a shocker, rallying past Iowa 64-63 Friday in the first round of the NCAA Tournament.

"I actually saw it go in through the back of the glass," Wallace said.

"I can't believe this."

Neither could the third-seeded Hawkeyes.

Down by 17 with 8½ minutes left, the 14th-seeded Demons from Natchitoches, La., stormed back to knock off the Big Ten Tournament champions with swarming defense and clutch shooting.

"I'd like to say I had it all drawn up, but we were just trying to get the guys in the game who could create havoc on defense and score on offense," said Northwestern State coach Mike McConathy, who shuffled 11 players on and off the court.

Hawkeyes star Greg Brunner made one of two foul shots with 14.6 seconds left for a 63-61 lead.

The Demons came down court, missed a shot, and Wallace corralled the rebound.

Wallace turned and, as he fell out of bounds, scored with half a second left.

"I chased it down and looked at the clock," he said. "I knew I had chance for one or two dribbles, so I shot it and fell."

After Wallace made the shot that will be replayed for years, he tore off his jersey as his team-

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Jermaine Wallace
Northwestern State player
who hit shot to beat Iowa

mates hollered and hugged all over the court.

Under the net where Wallace's shot cleanly fell, Brunner was on his back with his jersey pulled over his face.

"A senior shouldn't miss that shot, but I did," Brunner said.

The Demons (26-7) will face West Virginia in the second round of the Atlanta Regional on Sunday.

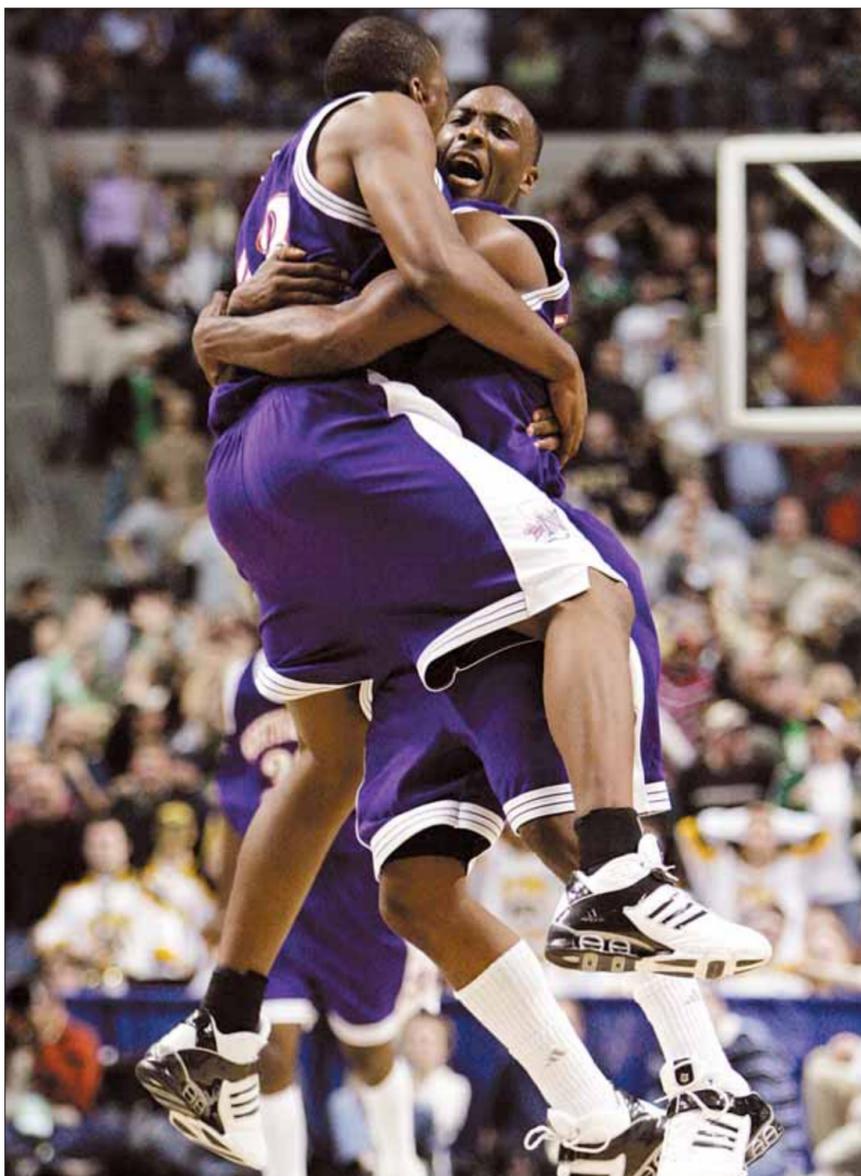
Iowa (25-9) finished No. 15 in the final regular-season rankings and will spend the next weeks and perhaps months wondering if coach Steve Alford, a former Indiana star, will leave to replace the resigning Mike Davis and lead the Hoosiers.

Shortly after the Hawkeyes' second straight first-round exit, Alford was asked if he will be Iowa's coach next season.

"We're two minutes after the game," he responded. "My focus and concern hasn't changed. We've gone 7-3 during this stretch (since the rumors started). These kids have been extremely focused, and my concern is to try to lead them."

Northwestern State trailed 18-4, rallied, then fell behind 54-37 before coming back again.

"We had good leads in both halves, and we couldn't complete either half," Alford said. "It came down to our inability to keep them off the off glass and the turnover-assist ratio."



Northwestern State University's Jermaine Wallace, left, celebrates with a teammate after his last-second 3-point basket beat Iowa 64-63 in the NCAA Tournament at The Palace in Auburn Hills, Mich., on Friday.



AP PHOTO

NASCAR Nextel Cup driver Bill Lester gets ready for practice at Atlanta Motor Speedway in Hampton, Ga., on Friday.

Lester in Nextel Cup lineup for Atlanta race

By MIKE HARRIS
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

HAMPTON, Ga.

Bill Lester stole the show from pole-winner Kasey Kahne on Friday night at Atlanta Motor Speedway, earning a spot in the Golden Corral 500 to become the first black driver to qualify for a race in NASCAR's top series in nearly 20 years.

Driving a Dodge fielded by Bill Davis Racing and facing enormous pressure, the slim, quiet NASCAR truck series regular put up a lap of 190.502 mph early in the Nextel Cup series qualifying session on the 1.5-mile oval.

That was nearly 6 mph faster than he ran in practice. But Lester still had to wait for more than an hour to see if it would be good enough to make it into the 43-car field for Sunday's race.

"I only need to hold my breath for 30 or 35 more drivers," a smiling Lester said after getting out of his car. "I'm just glad I was able to realize my dream and get this opportunity."

The top 35 cars from last season's owners points are guaranteed starting spots at every race, leaving only eight places to the other entries like the 45-year-old Lester, trying to make a Cup race for the first time.

He made it easily, qualifying 19th overall and the fastest of 15 drivers who tried to drive their way into the race.

"It's overwhelming," said Lester, who raced later Friday night in the truck race. "This is the culmination of a very long dream that I've had to race at the top level of motorsports. ... I'm hoping to think that this is the beginning, that it will open a few more eyes and get the attention of corporate America."

Kahne's lap of 192.553 was just good enough to beat Ryan Newman's 192.540.

SUNDAY'S LINEUP

The starting lineup for Sunday's Nextel Cup Golden Corral 500 at Atlanta Motor Speedway in Hampton, Ga.

- (9) Kasey Kahne, Dodge, 192.553 mph.
- (12) Ryan Newman, Dodge, 192.540.
- (31) Jeff Burton, Chevrolet, 191.973.
- (43) Bobby Labonte, Dodge, 191.914.
- (18) J.J. Yeley, Chevrolet, 191.854.
- (29) Kevin Harvick, Chevrolet, 191.794.
- (11) Denny Hamlin, Chevrolet, 191.695.
- (16) Greg Biffle, Ford, 191.496.
- (2) Kurt Busch, Dodge, 191.357.
- (42) Casey Mears, Dodge, 191.245.
- (16) Mark Martin, Ford, 190.968.
- (24) Jeff Gordon, Chevrolet, 190.962.
- (13) (01) Joe Nemecek, Chevrolet, 190.922.
- (48) Jimmie Johnson, Chevrolet, 190.817.
- (41) Reed Sorenson, Dodge, 190.804.
- (07) Clint Bowyer, Chevrolet, 190.765.
- (5) Kyle Busch, Chevrolet, 190.633.
- (99) Carl Edwards, Ford, 190.568.
- (17) Bill Lester, Dodge, 190.502.
- (19) Jeremy Mayfield, Dodge, 189.928.
- (20) Tony Stewart, Chevrolet, 189.896.
- (15) Paul Menard, Chevrolet, 189.785.
- (61) Kevin Lepage, Ford, 189.720.
- (55) Michael Waltrip, Dodge, 189.649.
- (21) Ken Schrader, Ford, 189.441.
- (8) Dale Earnhardt Jr., Chevrolet, 189.396.
- (17) Matt Kenseth, Ford, 189.357.
- (38) Elliott Sadler, Ford, 189.286.
- (10) Scott Riggs, Dodge, 189.131.
- (22) Dave Blaney, Dodge, 189.092.
- (88) Dale Jarrett, Ford, 188.552.
- (45) Kyle Petty, Dodge, 188.398.
- (14) Sterling Marlin, Chevrolet, 188.398.
- (39) (66) Jamie McMurray, Ford, 188.341.
- (1) Martin Truex Jr., Chevrolet, 188.264.
- (7) Robby Gordon, Chevrolet, 188.162.
- (25) Brian Vickers, Chevrolet, 188.041.
- (40) David Stremme, Dodge, 187.970.
- (66) Jeff Green, Chevrolet, 187.843.
- (49) Brent Sherman, Dodge, 187.614.
- (00) Hermie Sadler, Ford, 187.304.
- (4) Scott Wimmer, Chevrolet, 187.139.
- (96) Terry Labonte, Chevrolet, past champion.

Top seed UConn survives second-half scare

The Associated Press

PHILADELPHIA

An overwhelming underdog in its first NCAA Tournament appearance, Albany nearly pulled off a historic upset over Connecticut.

In the end, the Huskies' skill and experience was too much for the Great Danes.

Marcus Williams scored a season-high 21 points, and Denham Brown added 17, helping top-seeded Connecticut overcome a 12-point second-half deficit to beat 16th-seeded Albany.

Jamar Wilson had 19 points, and Kirsten Zoellner and Lucious Jordan each had 12 for Albany.

A No. 16 seed has never beaten a No. 1 seed in the NCAA Tournament. But Albany (21-11) played like it belonged on the same floor with one of the nation's perennial powerhouse programs. No one thought Albany could match Connecticut's depth and talent, except for the Great Danes.

Albany never had a winning season in nine years at the Division I level until now.

But Albany led 50-38 points 8½ minutes into the second half, before the Huskies (28-3) went on a 20-4 run.

A 21½-point favorite, Connecticut led only 31-30 at halftime. A 13-0 run early in the second half gave Albany a 43-33 lead.

In other NCAA action

WASHINGTON REGIONAL

George Mason 75
Michigan State 65

DAYTON, Ohio — George Mason sure proved it belonged in the NCAA Tournament.



AP PHOTO

Albany's Kirsten Zoellner dunks during Friday's NCAA Tournament game against Connecticut in Philadelphia.

Despite critical comments by some experts that it should not have gotten an at-large berth, the 11th-seeded Patriots used hot shooting, a balanced attack and a surprising rebounding superiority to upset sixth-seeded Michigan State.

Folarin Campbell scored 21 points and made all eight of his shots from the field, Will Thomas had 18 points and 14 rebounds, and Lamar Butler and Jai Lewis each had 13 points for George Mason (24-7).

ATLANTA REGIONAL

West Virginia 64
Southern Illinois 46

AUBURN HILLS, Mich. — Kevin Pittsnogle scored 18 points to lead the sixth-seeded Mountaineers to an easy victory against 11th-seeded Southern Illinois.

West Virginia (21-10) staggered into the tournament having lost five of its past seven games but looked nothing like the sluggish team that got bounced by Pitt in the the Big East Tournament. The Mountaineers made 11 3-pointers

in the game and will play 14th-seeded Northwestern State in the second round Sunday. They're headed to the second round in back-to-back seasons for the first time since Jerry West's days in 1959-60.

N.C. State 58
California 52

DALLAS — Tenth-seeded North Carolina State snapped a four-game losing streak thanks to Cameron Bennerman.

First, he made a tough 15-footer off the right side of the foul line, then faked a defender to get an open 3-pointer with 32.3 seconds left as N.C. State (22-9) avenged a first-round tourney loss to the Golden Bears three years ago. Cal won that on a 3 with 3.9 seconds left.

Bennerman led the way by scoring 12 of his 18 points in the second half.

OAKLAND REGIONAL

Bucknell 59
Arkansas 45

DALLAS — Charles Lee and Kevin Bettencourt led an offense that lived on the 3-point shot, carrying the Patriot League champions into the second round of the NCAA Tournament for the second straight year.

Bucknell (27-4) led nearly the entire game but had to sweat it out in the final minutes. Its postgame celebration was more relief than the joy Bucknell players felt following their stunning upset against Kansas last March.

Technically, Bucknell pulled off another upset because it was the ninth seed. The Razorbacks (22-10) were seeded eighth in their first tournament trip since 2001, when Nolan Richardson was still in charge.

Memphis 94
Oral Roberts 78

DALLAS — Conference USA player of the year Rodney Carney had 19 points, and Andre Allen matched his season high with 11, all in a late first-half spurt that put Memphis ahead to stay.

Even though Memphis (31-3) entered the NCAA Tournament as the only team other than Duke with 30 wins, some thought the Tigers might be the first No. 1 seed to lose to a No. 16 seed.

Then, the Tigers were down 33-29 late in the first half and really did seem vulnerable.

But with their 3-point shooting and balanced scoring (five players in double figures), the Tigers had plenty to withstand Oral Roberts (21-12) in their first game as a top seed.

Pittsburgh 79
Kent State 64

AUBURN HILLS, Mich. — The fifth-seeded Panthers scored so easily and often they frayed the net at one end of the court and just about wore out the twine at the other.

Aaron Gray scored 17 and Ronald Ramon had 16, both shooting 6 of 6 from the field, to lead a balanced attack as Pittsburgh made 67 percent of its shots.

Carl Krauser had 11 points and nine assists and Levon Kendall added 10 for the Panthers (25-7).

MINNEAPOLIS REGIONAL

Georgetown 54
Northern Iowa 49

DAYTON, Ohio — Seven-foot-2 Roy Hibbert scored 17 points, and seventh-seeded Georgetown relied on its clamp-down defense for the win.

No. 10 seed Northern Iowa (23-10) had no one to match up with Hibbert, who went 8 of 10 from the field and had nine rebounds before fouling out with 1:11 to go. He also set the tone inside on defense. The Panthers opened the second half in a 2-of-18 shooting slump against the Big East's stingiest defense.

For Georgetown, the victory amounted to a homecoming. The Hoyas won the NCAA title in 1984 under John Thompson, who took the Hoyas to three Final Four appearances during a four-year span.

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kind of hard to explain the pressure they had on them."

Even so, the 87-83 win Thursday against San Diego State was not a coaching masterpiece. Indiana needed every bit of good luck and heads-up play to win at the end.

Another effort like that against Adam Morrison and the Zags, and it almost certainly will be over.

Davis, of course, has been through worse predicaments than this in his angst-filled tenure as Bob Knight's successor. Preparing for Morrison isn't going to cost this coach any sleep.

"He's the leading scorer in the country," Davis said. "There is nothing we can really do. We just have to hope he misses some shots."

Compared to what Davis has dealt with at Indiana, coach Mark Few's time at Gonzaga has been a love affair.

The Bulldogs have emerged from the tiny West Coast Conference and turned into a power. This is their eighth straight trip to the tournament.

But there is this one thing: Gonzaga hasn't made it out of the first weekend since 2001, back when the program still had that cute 'n' cuddly feel to it.

Could the failures in March be chipping away at the coach's credibility?

"I think that's really shallow," Few said.

Of course, a few early tournament losses are nothing compared to the season-long scrutiny Davis and his players have been subjected to, a situation Few calls "Sad. Really sad."

"I think Mike's a heck of a coach," Few said. "It's kind of

the age we live in. There's more pressure on coaches and more pressure on players."

Given the pressures, Vaden figures he should be somewhere he wants to be, playing for someone he wants to play for.

When Davis announced he was stepping down last month, Vaden said he'd probably be leaving, too. It was his 3-pointer Thursday with 3.3 seconds left that extended his stay at least one more game.

And Killingsworth? The Alabama native left Auburn after his coach, Cliff Ellis, was fired, then moved to Indiana and sat out a year, all so he could play for Davis.

Now, they are both one loss away from saying goodbye.

"We're not thinking about losing," Killingsworth said.

Davis would love to give his boys the ultimate parting gift, in the form of a national championship.

He insists he doesn't look at each bus ride, each trip to the gym

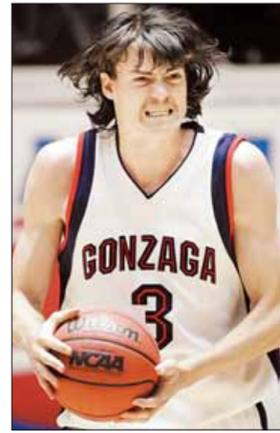
and each game as potentially his last. He is too busy trying to make this ending special for the team.

Still, he has been remarkably candid these past few days.

About his future: "I'll be twice as good a coach and my recruiting will be three times better than what it is now. I recruited at a level where the biggest concern every year was whether I was supposed to be here."

On what he'd tell a young coach getting into a program like Indiana: "Expectations should be according to your personnel. You need the support of the program, first of all."

On how big an issue race was in his tepid relationship with the fans: "None. When I got the job, I was like a stepson. Every time you see the stepson, you see the ex. People saw me and couldn't believe I was doing what I was doing. They only saw all the things Coach Knight had done."



AP PHOTO

Gonzaga's Adam Morrison led the nation in scoring this season. The Bulldogs will face Indiana tonight in an NCAA Tournament Oakland Regional game in Salt Lake City.