

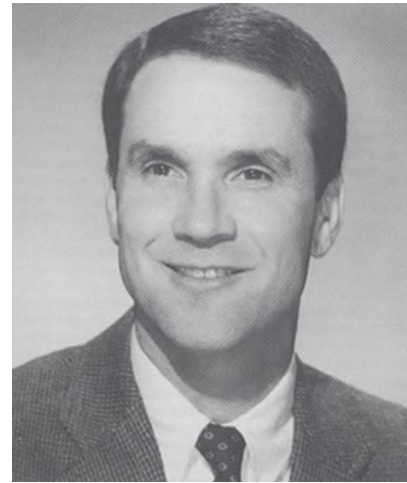
CHC - Vandy Defeats Vols in NIT

by Bill Traugher

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The Vanderbilt men's basketball team was fortunate to gain a berth in the 1990 postseason National Invitational Tournament. After finishing the 1989-90 season with a 16-14 record, first-year coach Eddie Fogler was molding the program to his style.

Leading the way for the Commodores were Eric Reid, Derrick Wilcox, Kevin Anglin, Steve Grant, Todd Milholland and Scott Draud. The Commodores faced Louisiana Tech in the opening round and won 98-90 in overtime in Memorial Gymnasium. The second-round matched the Commodores and rival Tennessee Vols. The game was shown on ESPN and played at Vanderbilt.



Eddie Fogler

A 15,399-seat sellout was waiting for Vols coach Wade Houston also in his first year at UT. Tennessee finished their season at 15-13. The Vols defeated Memphis State in their opening round, 73-71 in Memphis. The Vols leading players were Allan Houston, Ian Lockhart, Greg Bell and Carlos Groves.

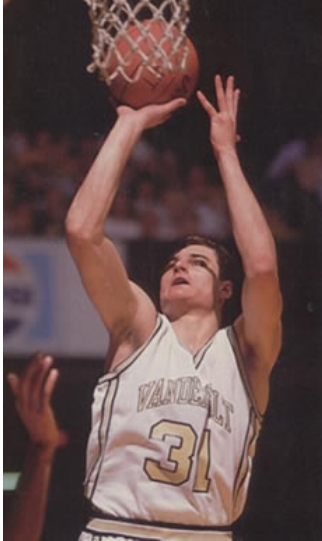
The teams split their regular season with the Vols defeating the Commodores 73-72 in Knoxville. Vanderbilt gained the split with a March, 98-74 Nashville victory the worst loss of the year for the Vols.

An estimated 4,000 UT fans were roaring in the first half as the Vols soared to a 16-point lead at intermission, 47-31. Tennessee shot a blistering 70% from the field in that first half. The Commodores were down by as much as 17 points to Louisiana Tech before coming back for the win.

"During halftime Coach Fogler told us that if we made a run we had to sustain it, "Draud, a junior, said after the game. "We knew we were back in the game, but we knew it was a long way from over."

Fogler also said after the game, "The first half we couldn't stop them. I couldn't believe they could keep shooting like that and thank goodness they couldn't. At the half we talked about our defense on the low post. I was concerned that we were giving up a bunch of easy shots."

It was a Grant dunk to open the second half scoring that led the Commodores to a 7-0 run. The Vols only scored twice on its first nine possessions of the second half, which led to a Commodore 21-4 surge that eliminated the halftime deficit.



Steve Grant

The Vols problems began to mount as they began to get into foul trouble. Center Lockhart was whistled for his fourth foul with 13:55 remaining in the game. Lockhart said after the game that he knew Vandy was coming at him and was timid when challenging near the basket. This opened the way for a Vandy inside game with Milholland a force.

Milholland sank a three-pointer with 12:33 on the clock to give the Commodores their first lead, 52-51 since their first basket of the game. But Bell immediately responded for the Vols with a basket to regain the lead 53-52. Milholland's hook shot and two Anglin free throws helped give Vanderbilt a 60-53 lead.

But Tennessee came back to regain the lead 61-60 with a Houston three-pointer and Groves three foul shots, the final two at the 9:13 mark. Milholland put the Commodores back into the lead with a basket before the lead changed hands two more times. Wilcox hit a jumper with 2:22 left in the game to give Vandy the lead for good, 78-77. Vanderbilt went on to the victory, 89-85.

Coach Houston had been vocal before the game in his displeasure about having to play a second NIT game on the road.

"We were definitely at a disadvantage," said Houston. "We wanted to get to the NCAA Tournament but when that didn't work out, I wasn't going to deprive this team of an opportunity to continue playing. These extra two games should help us next year.

"This was a tough loss for us. We had a lull there in the second half. You have to give Vanderbilt credit. Their kids played a great second half. Sure, the crowd was a factor; that's what I said all week long. The crowd becomes a sixth man on the floor. It makes officials question calls. We had to play two games in as tough a place to play as there is in the country."

The Vols blazing shooting percentage in the first half could not be maintained and recorded a 40% second half shooting. The Commodores outscored the Vols in the second half, 58-38. Vanderbilt was 9-of-20 from three-point range while the Vols were close at 8-of-20 shots.



Todd Milholland

Vanderbilt was led in scoring by Wilcox with 26 points, Milholland totaled 18 followed by Anglin's 11 points. Grant and Reid each added 10 points. Top scorer Houston had 31 points for the Vols while Lockhart and Bell recorded 23 and 19 points.

Said freshman Allan Houston, "You form your attitudes by experience and I just don't have a good attitude about the NIT right now. They sent us on the road to two very tough places, so it was going to be hard for us to go to New York. This is good

incentive for me to want to go to the NCAA Tournament the next three years. I'd rather go there than play in the NIT again."



Derrick Wilcox

Vanderbilt continued in the tournament and defeated New Orleans in Memorial Gymnasium, 88-65 to earn a trip to New York's Madison Square Garden. The Commodores beat Penn State 75-62 in the semifinals while capturing the NIT championship by defeating Saint Louis in the finals, 74-72.

The Commodores final record was 21-14 and the only national tournament championship in the men's Vanderbilt's basketball history.

Next week read about Vanderbilt's first appearance in the NCAA National Tournament in 1965 with Center Clyde Lee.

Traughber's Tidbit: The first time Vanderbilt's basketball team won 20 games was in 1927. Coach Josh Cody's squad won the Southern Conference Championship with a 20-4 mark. The Commodores would not win 20 games again until 1964-65 with their first SEC championship at 24-4 under Coach Roy Skinner. The 2006-07 Commodores are the 15th team to register 20-win seasons.

If you have any comments or suggestions you can contact Bill Traughber via e-mail WLTraughber@aol.com.