

# S'craft team set high standard for future squads

It was a season to remember for the Schoolcraft College men's basketball team, one which may be hard to duplicate.

When a team wins 35 of 36 games, takes on all challengers and wins tough games on the road, you have to sit back in amazement. Only one had seven-minute stretch separated the Ocelots from a National Junior College Athletic Association Division 1 title last week in Hutchinson, Kan.

After building a 13-point second-half lead in the semifinals Friday night against eventual national champion Dixie (Utah), the Ocelots found themselves in jail — all five starters on the bench in foul trouble.

Schoolcraft's top player, Mike Williams, picked up his fourth on a dubious call with 13:07 to go. And the team's heart-and-soul, point-guard Ron Harris, fouled out with 3:17 left. Still, the Ocelots had a chance to tie, but tournament MVP Jaime Lloreda, a 6-foot-9 center headed to LSU, blocked



BRAD EMMONS

Javon Clark's three-point attempt from the dead corner as time expired. Dixie escaped with a 72-69 win and went on to rally in the second half and beat homestate favorite Coffeyville (Kan.) for the national championship the next night before 7,000 in the Hutchinson Sports Arena. Schoolcraft and defending champion Wabash Valley (Ill.) were left to play for third place. And to the Ocelots' credit, they bounced back from their only blemish on the year with a resounding 111-86 win.

The NJCAA Tournament is like no other. It brings 16 high-caliber teams from across the country into one venue. And it's quite an extravaganza.

First, it draws a slew of coaches scouring for talent.

Big name coaches seen last week included Roy Williams (Kansas), Steve Alford (Iowa), Dick Bennett (Oklahoma State), Steve McClain (Wyoming), Rod Barbee (Mississippi) and Gary Waters (Rutgers).

The list of current and former NBA players who have played in "Hutch" is impressive as well.

The community of Hutchinson gets totally behind the event with a network of volunteers, many of whom are war

veterans associated with the local VFW and American Legion.

So what were coaches and fans saying this year about Schoolcraft?

There may have been more athletic teams, but not many were smarter, more disciplined or better defensively. All five Ocelot starters averaged in double figures for the tournament, as well as a key reserve.

This team brought their 'A' game to the table most nights.

Who could forget the three tournament wins at Southern Idaho, the victory of Flint Mott, followed by the impressive run through the conference, state and region tournaments?

Not to be forgotten was the 13-hour odyssey to Wahpeton, N.D. and a 92-82 victory before 4,000 fans at North Dakota State College of Science.

The opening round NJCAA Tournament overtime victory over Allegheny (Md.) was another highlight followed by a lopsided win in the quarterfinals over Itawamba (Miss.).

The 12 Schoolcraft players who traveled to Hutchinson all brought something unique different to the table.

Ironically, only two players returned from last year's 32-4 team which qualified for Hutchinson — guard Javon

Clark and North Farmington's Emir Medunjanin.

Here's a brief look at the pieces of the puzzle, which resulted in a remarkable fit and the most successful basketball season in school history.

## THE STARTERS AND HEAD COACH

Mike Williams, 6-7 forward: Made the All-Tournament squad while averaging a double-double. Despite weighing about 190, Williams an uncanny rebounder who can score and pass. High majors are looking at him, but he may be suited better for a good mid-major. We haven't heard the last of him. Had he not sat out last year because of grades, Schoolcraft might have won the national title in 2001.

Rulon Harris, 6-4 guard: The transfer from Flint Mott was overlooked for the Small Man Award in Hutchinson. He was simply outstanding in the tournament opener again, Allegheny, scoring a game-high 29 points. His play reminds you of Maurice Cheeks, the prototype point-guard. University of Detroit Mercy is getting a steal. A very efficient player.

Javon Clark, 6-0 guard: The team's top 3-point marksman and second-leading scorer was hounded defensively by taller guards throughout the post-season. He acquitted himself quite well. He's a team player who doesn't make mistakes and plays solid defense. His shooting alone will garner him serious Division I looks.

Yaku Moton-Spruill, 6-6 center: The Westland John Glenn grad, who also doubles as the team comedian, found a home on Haggerty Road after stints at Paris JC (Tex.) and Mount Zion Christian Academy (N.C.). He has the size, bulk (260 pounds), footwork and touch around the basket to contribute to a mid-major or low mid-major school. If he improves his rebounding skills, watch out.

Emir Medunjanin, 6-8 forward: A solid role player who got tougher as the season wore on. He often guarded the opposing team's top player. He scored 10 and 15 in his final two games as an Ocelot and proved he could grab rebounds and loose balls. He should find a home at a low major and will not disappoint.

Carlos Briggs, head coach: His five-year record of 141-24 speaks at Schoolcraft speaks for itself. He learned a lot from his first experience in Hutchinson. He put this team together virtually from scratch. You wonder how much longer he'll be in Livonia because Division I assistant jobs will be offered. The former Schoolcraft All-American relates well to his players and gets them to buy into his system. He is also a relentless recruiter.

(Brad Emmons is the Livonia-Westland sports editor for The Observer and can be reached at (734) 953-2123 or by e-mail at bemmons@oe.homecomm.net.)

# 3rd-place finish leaves Ocelots ending on positive note

BY BRAD EMMONS  
STAFF WRITER  
bemmons@oe.homecomm.net

Their dreams shattered by foul trouble in Friday's NJCAA Division 1 semifinals, the Schoolcraft College men's basketball team was determined not to let their glorious season end on a sour note.

In Saturday's consolation final, Schoolcraft finished its

## COLLEGE HOOPS

banner year 35-1 with a convincing 111-86 victory over defending champion Wabash Valley (Ill.) at the Hutchinson (Kan.) Sports Arena.

Dixie (Utah), which ousted Schoolcraft from the winner's bracket Friday, 72-69, rallied

late in the second half to win the national title against Coffeyville (Kan.), 82-81, before 7,000 fans in Hutchinson.

"Our goal was to finish as high as possible," said Schoolcraft coach Carlos Briggs, whose team settled for third place. "We didn't achieve our ultimate goal of winning a national championship, but I thought we came out tonight with some intensity."

both offensively and defensively, that we've shown all season."

The Ocelots also had some incentive against Wabash, led by Kentucky signee and last year's tournament MVP Antwan Barbour.

The Warriors ousted Schoolcraft in overtime during last year's quarterfinals and went on to win the coveted crown.

Schoolcraft shot 67 percent in the first half (19 of 28) to take a 48-39 halftime lead as 6-foot-8 center Yaku Moton-Spruill (Westland John Glenn) and 6-foot guard Javon Clark (Detroit Cass Tech) each scored 12 points.

The Ocelots maintained their lead throughout the second half, but Wabash pulled to within six, 76-70, on a three-pointer by Barbour with 10:19 to go.

Schoolcraft then went on a 41-16 run to end the game in grand fashion.

All five Ocelot starters scored

on double figures as Clark finished with a team-high 21, hitting five of 11 from three-point range.

Moton-Spruill added 18 points and seven rebounds, while Mike Williams, a 6-7 forward from Detroit City High, added his third double-double of the tournament with 17 points and 11 rebounds.

Emir Medunjanin (North Farmington) contributed 16 points and five assists, while point-guard Rulon Harris (Detroit Mumford) added 12 points, including four of seven shots beyond the arc. Harris also dished out five assists.

Reserves Delvar Barrett (Detroit Cooley) and Ronald Dorsey (Detroit Pershing) added nine and seven points, respectively.

Tony Allen, a 6-4 guard from Chicago, led Wabash with 26 points. Herman Davis finished with 17, while Barbour and C.J.

Hill each contributed 16.

The Warriors were missing starter Quinell Brown, a 6-6 freshman forward who suffered 34 stitches to his leg after kicking a glass window in disgust following Friday night's 71-70 semifinal loss to Coffeyville.

"Schoolcraft has depth and size, it's tough to play them with a six player rotation when you normally go with seven," Wabash coach Mark Nelson said. "Quinell is a big player for us and a big rebounder for us. We had some mistakes we made inside, but I was pleased with the effort considering who we had out of the rotation."

The Ocelots were superior in all phases of the game against the 32-6 Warriors.

Schoolcraft shot 65 percent from the floor (42 of 65) and 71 percent from the free throw line (15 of 21). They also outrebounded

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