

February 1, 2006 • getoffus.com

Don't call that bookie just yet



JOSH GOFF
Round of Goff

It's not too often I play prognosticator. Seemingly all too often, I find a way to end up being way off. I have no idea what percentage of the time I'm wrong, but just from a self-confidence standpoint I don't really want to get involved in anything I can't be right at least 90 percent of the time. You can't reasonably expect 100, but you'd like to be right nearly all the time. This is why I don't bet on sports or take math classes.

I'm the guy who thought Tim Thomas was going to be an NBA stud, and that guys named Jerald Honeycutt and Shea Seals were sleeper picks who would have good NBA careers. Honeycutt is either in Lebanon or stocking shelves at Costco, and Shea is no better than the second best basketball-playing Seals I know.

I have – without the influence of drugs or alcohol – predicted the Cubs to make a World Series. I've never gone so far to definitively say "Next year is now", but I've come close. And the team has come close, once. But close is all – and as a half-lucid faux-philosopher friend of mine once said in seventh grade, "Close only counts in horseshoes, hand grenades, and farts."

So, given the fact I spent my formative years being educated by the same folks who advanced that guy to seventh grade, it's no wonder I'm not always spot-on with my evaluations and predictions.

All this has got to be good news for the Bears and Sugar Bears – neither of whom I predict to win the conference this year, at least not outright.

Last year the Sugar Bears ripped through the GSC with a record of 15-1 and the Bears split the West crown with Delta State at 11-5.

Already this year the Sugar Bears have lost twice as many conference games. Granted, that's a whopping two, but it's one more than Henderson and the same as Delta, both of whom own wins over UCA.

I don't know how much difference there is between last year's team and this one, but this one obviously doesn't have Carone Harris. However, last year's didn't have a bench featuring Renita Dobbins, Micaela Thomas (both starters a year ago), Allyson Sample and Brittany Greer. That's 25.9 points, and 9.3 rebounds per game plus the conference's assist leader and the team's leading 3-point shooter coming off the bench. Not even *Dialogues of Plato* gets that deep.

The Sugar Bears got off to a good start of the second round of the GSC season Monday night and sit at 7-2. But they still have to go to DSU and HSU, plus travel to Ouachita Baptist (who beat Henderson) tomorrow night. I fully expect them to handle UAM, Harding and Tech and potentially manhandle SAU (given the episode at Magnolia last week).

Those other three games? I don't know what to expect. OBU had the Sugar Bears dead to rights before Dobbins went nuts. Henderson and Delta both won, but I'm not sure they actually beat the Sugar Bears. All three of those games could go either way. UCA has since added Thomas, freshmen Greer and Mariesha Piggee (when conscious) keep improving, and the team is clicking. It's not the same team it was before. But for some reason I just don't feel comfortable saying they'll go 8-0 in the second round.

Each game looks winnable, but just by the law of averages you think they'd have to lose once, right? At 7-1 the second time through, that makes them 13-3 in conference play, meaning they'd need somebody else to beat Henderson just to get into a three-way tie for the West title. If you can get each of them to fall thrice, great. I just don't

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Sugar Bears keep rolling through GSC

BY JOSH GOFF
Editor



Kai Caddy | ECHO

Lauren Williams had a career-high 18 points at Southern Arkansas on Thursday.

It's beginning to look a little familiar for the Sugar Bears.

Last year, en route to 15 conference wins, UCA consistently dominated the competition, ringing up nine double-digit victories. After a shaky 6-2 start to the conference season can be, the Sugar Bears are making their move.

Monday night, they disposed of Christian Brothers 83-69 for their third consecutive double-digit victory. Coming into Monday's game they had defeated UAM by 19 and SAU by 20.

"It feels good to win any game no matter how much it's by – it's always a win," said Renita Dobbins, who scored

17 points, grabbed four rebounds and dished out six assists in Monday's victory. "As time goes on we play better and better each game."

Lauren Williams, who averaged 16 points per game in the CBU and SAU wins, has noticed a marked improvement in play for herself and the team.

"I feel like I'm playing better," she said. "I'm trying to keep it more consistent. We've got some people not able to play, so I had to step it up a little bit. We're all playing a lot better together. We're trying to play more up-tempo and that's helping us out a lot. Everybody's stepping up. We plan on going 8-0 this second round. That's our goal and we think we can reach that."

For that to happen, Williams – who

scored only three points in the first meeting with CBU – needs to keep scoring, according to coach Checcola Seals.

"I asked Lauren how many she scored last time we played Christian Brothers and she said 'none', and I told her 'No, you actually shot the ball'," Seals said. "So I said 'Okay the last time I told you to shoot you scored for us, now what do I got to do (to keep that happening)? She said to keep telling her every ballgame. So that's what I've got to do. Each game I've got to tell her to score and she's going to score for us."

If Williams does or not, the Sugar Bears may have found another threat in

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UCA basketball teams are halfway down the

ROAD to TUPELO

BY JOSH GOFF
Editor

With Monday's games against Christian Brothers, the UCA basketball teams began the second round of Gulf South Conference play, and commenced the beginning of the end as the teams cycle through their GSC foes one final time before heading off to the Southland Conference.

In the nine-team GSC West, teams play a home-and-home with each of their division rivals and the top five advance to square off against the top five from the eight-team GSC East in the conference tournament in Tupelo, Miss.

As the second trip through begins, the Bears and Sugar Bears have different vantage points of the road ahead.

The Sugar Bears (15-5, 7-2) have a few speedbumps lying ahead, but unless the wheels come flying off, they should easily reach their destination.

The Bears (12-7, 5-4), on the other hand, are stuck right in the middle of a traffic jam and have no idea if they'll see Tupelo or if they'll stall out in Conway. They are by no means dragging up the rear, but they aren't leading the way, either. They find themselves sandwiched in amongst a host of other teams and only a lucky break and some crafty maneuvering and drafting will nudge them past their chief competitors.

On the men's side, Delta State is on cruise control as they breezed past the competition en route to a sweep of the league in round one. After that it's as congested as Bears coach Rand Chappell can remember it being.

"You're shooting for a conference championship, but Delta State is playing like a team that may not be caught," Chappell said. "I think it's the most balanced the league has been from top to bottom. It's a sign that there are a lot of new coaches who have come in with a lot of energy and brought their programs to the level the better programs have been."

At the turn, Delta was 8-0 with UCA, Henderson State and UA-Monticello deadlocked at 5-3 for second place. CBU was fifth at 4-4, with SAU and Harding at 3-5. Ouachita Baptist and Arkansas Tech at 2-6 and 1-7, respectively, have the steepest climb in front of them during the second half – but with only a couple games' separation from fifth in a parity-filled league, anything can happen.

"Really, I think it's going to be a dogfight," Chappell said. "There's going to be at least six or seven teams battling for those last four spots for the conference tournament. If you got 9-7 you're probably in – 8-8, maybe. Everybody's going to be

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GSC Standings
▶ PAGE 3B

Piggee on wrong end of train wreck
▶ PAGE 3B



Illustration by Kai Caddy | ECHO

Halfway through the Gulf South Conference season Darryl Jones and Caronica Randle are leading the Bears and Sugar Bears in scoring. Both teams started their seasons with games Monday against Christian Brothers to continue their race toward the GSC Tournament at the BancorpSouth Center in Tupelo, Miss. March 1-5.

HOW THEY FARED ON THE FIRST HALF OF THE TRIP

BEARS	SUGAR BEARS
@ Christian Brothers • Win 64-55	@ Christian Brothers • Win 73-65
Ouachita Baptist • Win 61-58	Ouachita Baptist • Win 67-64
@ Arkansas Tech • Win 81-77 2OT	@ Arkansas Tech • Win 63-62
Henderson State • Loss 59-53	Henderson State • Loss 77-73 OT
@ Harding • Win 70-69	@ Harding • Win 88-76
Delta State • Loss 64-58	Delta State • Loss 52-50
Arkansas-Monticello • Win 54-53	Arkansas-Monticello • Win 76-57
@ Southern Arkansas • Loss 60-57	@ Southern Arkansas • Win 83-63
The Bears closed out the first half of the GSC season with three straight spotty performances and two losses. In one of the tightest conference races in recent memory the Bears are in a three-way tie for second place in the GSC West.	The Sugar Bears wrapped up the first half of the conference season with back-to-back big wins over Arkansas-Monticello and Southern Arkansas. They are sitting in third place in the GSC West behind Henderson and Delta State.

Bears 8 points shy of undefeated week

BY KAI CADDY
Sports Editor

In yet another close Gulf South Conference battle the UCA Bears came up just shy of pulling out a win against Christian Brothers.

The Bucs (11-8, 5-4) slid past the Bears (12-7, 5-4) thanks to a few mistakes down the stretch, 82-79.

The Bears trailed 80-76 after CBU's Kevin Weybright hit 1-of-2 technical free throws with 10 seconds left after Darryl Jones called a timeout the Bears didn't have. UCA pushed it up the floor and LeMar Phillips hit a 3 with 5.4 seconds to go to cut it to 80-79.

UCA sent Weybright back to the line and he hit two free throws to make it 82-79 with four seconds to go. The Bears took off down the floor and Aubrey Bruner took an off-balanced shot with :02 to go, it rimmed out and the Bears were sent back to the locker room with their second straight loss.

"We just couldn't stop [CBU]," coach Rand Chappell said. "Sure, we had a better offensive output than we've had in a while, but in the end we see that the game's not really about offense."

Weybright had 34 points in the game. The Bears could not find an answer for him.

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Josh Goff | ECHO

Joey Cortez skies over SAU's Kenny Langhorn on Thursday.

GSC repeat on minds of UCA women's golf

BY KENT LOFTUS
Staff Writer

Fresh off receiving its rings for last year's Gulf South Conference championship, the UCA women's golf team begins its spring season this week in Kiawah Island, S.C. at the Tusculum/Kiawah Island Intercollegiate Tournament.

"Other than conference and regionals, this is our biggest tournament of the year," assistant coach Julie Church said.

The Bears fall season began with a fifth place finish in the Northeastern State University Women's Golf Classic, and a fourth place finish in the Lenoir-Rhyne/Myrtle Beach

Intercollegiate Tournament. The semester was highlighted by a dominating 17-stroke

win at the Catawba/Patsy Rendleman Women's Invitational in North Carolina.

"We have beat a lot of good teams," Church said. "We took a lot of good things out of last semester's win and look to continue the

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ECHO SPORTS TRIVIA

OnTheScene

Q: For most of last Thursday's men's basketball game at Southern Arkansas it looked like it might be the Bears' lowest scoring output in history. But the Bears ended with a flurry of points to stay out of the record book. But what was UCA's lowest point output in a single game? (In the shot-clock era.)

A: On Jan. 30, 1988 the Bears lost to Drury 54-34. The 34 points remains the lowest output by any UCA mens basketball team. Despite the poor output that night, the '87-'88 Bears finished with a 24-9 record.

THIS WEEK'S GAMES

Basketball	
 @ Ouachita Baptist Tomorrow Women - 6 p.m. Men - 8 p.m.	 vs. Arkansas Tech Monday Women - 6 p.m. Men - 8 p.m.
Baseball	
 vs. Okla. Panhandle St. Friday, 1:30 p.m. Saturday, DH noon	 Mo. Southern Baymont Inn/Fazoli's Invitational Friday 5 p.m. Saturday All Day

QUOTABLES

"He's a good player, but probably not as good as his dad thinks he is."
- UCA Sports Information Director
Steve East on UAM coach Mike Newell's son Nate.
Nate is 14-of-66 from the field during his career at UCA.

"We're kinda slow over there in the coaching staff, but we figured it out."
- UCA coach Checocola Seals on her and her coaches figuring out the Sugar Bears need to run a little more.

Seahawks sail past Steelers, 54-34



THE ECHO STAFF PREDICTIONS

Echo Sports

defending champ.

Unlike the NFL's Super Bowl III, there was no guarantee prior to the Echo Sports Super Bowl III - but maybe there should've been.

For the third consecutive year, Echo Sports' own Kai Caddy and Josh Goff fired up some Madden and played out the Super Bowl match-up to get a gauge of what to expect come Sunday.



Goff, much like the Green Bay Packers, took the first two epic battles. However, in year three, the underdog had its day as Caddy led the Seahawks to a dominant 54-34 victory, piling up 464 yards of offense to just 241 for the Goff-captained Steelers.

The outcome should've been clear before the game even started, as the guys ditched a coin-flip to determine teams in favor of a Google Fight - which the Seahawks won 31.4 million to 30.7 million.

If that wasn't enough, the fact Goff was experiencing Vision Control passing for only the second game was probably enough to spell doom for the

All looked well for the Steelers early on as they took a commanding 20-0 lead just 1:54 in on touchdown runs of 83 and 43 yards by Willie Parker and a 70-yard pick-six by Ike Taylor.

Then the Steelers choked so bad it'd make Stan Heath jealous. In the worst collapse in sports since Tom Penders' technical, the Steelers allowed the Seahawks 40 straight points thanks to two interceptions for touchdowns, two Joe Jurevicius touchdown receptions, and a pair of Shaun Alexander touchdown runs.

Steelers' QB Ben Roethlisberger went down with 4:23 left in the 3rd, leaving Charlie Batch to run the show - and Goff near suicide.

Batch proved efficient enough, engineering an 11-play drive culminating in a 2-yard strike to Parker to make it 40-27. The Steelers cut it to six at 40-34 when Deshea Townsend took a Matt Hasselbeck pass 70 yards for a score.

The Steelers looked poised to tie or take the lead after Troy Polamalu intercepted another pass in the end zone, but was called for pass interference. The Seahawks capitalized on a 1-yard pass to Bobby Engram, and put the game away. Alexander,



EA Sports Madden NFL '06 Screen Capture by Kai Caddy | ECHO
The virtual Seattle Seahawks' Shaun Alexander takes a minute to breathe after scoring his first of three touchdowns in Echo Sports Super Bowl III. The MVP finished with 149 yards on 20 carries.

the game's MVP with 149 yards and 3 touchdowns on 20 carries, added a trash-time touchdown with 19 seconds to push the final margin to 20.

Hasselbeck passed for 327 yards in the win, and Jurevicius had 14 receptions for 205 yards and 2 touchdowns.

Parker had 154 yards on 15 carries for Pittsburgh in the loss.

For once, the Echo Sports Super Bowl is probably in no way indicative of the actual Super Bowl's score or spread. Do not place any wagers based on what transpired as it is a result of an inordinate amount of turnovers, unfamiliarity with the Vision Control passing, shoddy tackling, Lord Jurevicius and Charlie Batch.

Goff From 1B

know if that's going to happen.

That being said, if any team can go 8-0 in this league, it'd be the Sugar Bears. Delta usually can't throw it in the ocean and they rely on killer defense to win games, and Henderson is kind of all over the place - typically relying on athletic superiority. We saw where that got Shaw last year.

Remember, the Sugar Bears won the girls-ball portion of the Henderson game. I think the Sugar Bears are the best basketball team in the league, but they don't consistently excel at one facet like Delta with

defense.

So anyway, I think the Sugar Bears go 7-1 (I don't know who'll beat them, it's just never safe to predict perfection - especially with injuries popping up) this round and finish second. Henderson, UCA, Delta, UAM and OBU ... that's my picks for Tupelo. Maybe I'll be proven wrong, and that's fine. I promise I won't be heartbroken.

As for the Bears, who knows? The men's West division is just nuts. Delta State might go 16-0 with every other team finishing 7-9 and no game decided by more than five.

Right now the Bears are in the mix for second place (Delta

appears to be your clear leader, having swept the first round), but there's just one game's separation between second and fifth. The next three teams are only two down in the win column.

Only the top five make the conference tournament, and unless something drastic happens, we won't know Nos. 2-5 until Feb. 23.

The Bears are much like their NFL namesake - they can frustrate you to no end on defense, but they haven't mastered that "offense" thing yet.

I think they'll finish with 9 or 10 wins, and they'll find their way to Tupelo along with Delta,

Henderson, UAM and probably Christian Brothers.

I think it may be a dogfight between the Bears, Reddies, and Boll Weevils for slots 2-4. UAM could potentially be in better shape, if Nate Newell wakes up and realizes he's not JJ Redick.

Either way, it's Delta's world - you're just stuck in it. And that's horrible, since Delta's world looks like Cleveland, Miss.

No matter how it shakes out, this last month of conference play promises to be exciting and UCA's teams will be right in the thick of things.

Of course, that's just my opinion. I could be wrong.

Repeat From 1B

trend this week."

The Bears start the spring ranked 11th in the nation by golfstat.com.

"Were a very solid team," Church said.

The Bears will play four tournaments this semester, as well as possible conference and regional invitations. Rollins College will defend its national championship and its No. 1 ranking as they meet the Bears in South Carolina.

"We want to be the best team, we want to win everything" freshman Nicole Forshner said.

The team is lead by Christina Lecuyer, a junior from Edmonton, Alberta who was selected as a NGCA All-American last year.

"All the girls are good enough to lead the team, but Christina had a good fall," Church said.

"We've been working on a lot of short game and putting, the important part of the game that separates the good from the great."

The Bears are in a good position to bring everything together and be the best in Division II golf this semester.

Forshner is confident. "We can be that No. 1 team," she said.

Counseling Center Groups Spring 2006

The Counseling Center is offering the following groups:

The ABCs of Healthy Relationships: Members of this group will be able to identify a healthy relationship, determine what they can live with and, live without, in a partner as well as clarify their own relationship goals. This group will meet for four sessions.

SHY: This hands on group for those of you who get anxious in social settings. In this group participants will work on verbal and nonverbal skills when meeting people either in a group or one-on one. This group will meet for four to six sessions.

Mother and Me: Freud believed that our relationship with our mother affected us throughout our lifetime. If your relationship with your mother is a source of psychological conflict then consider joining this group to gain insight and power. This is a processing group where participants will unravel the influence of their past on present behaviors, investigate an alternative and actively choose from their options.

Boosting Your Self-Esteem: If your self-esteem needs an occasional boost this group is for you. Learn practical ways to increase self-image, self-esteem and assertiveness skills. This group will meet for six sessions.

ANGRY?: Do you want to explore the origins of your anger? Join this anger management group and learn how to understand, channel and redirect your anger. This group will meet for six sessions.

The Art of Relaxing: Learning relaxation techniques can help reduce tension, stress and enhance overall health. Participants in this group will have the opportunity to learn and practice breathing techniques, progressive relaxation skills and visualization exercises. This group will meet for three to four sessions.

Being More Assertive: This group is designed for those who want to be more effective in their self-expression. Sessions will focus on verbal and non-verbal communication, practice of assertive behaviors and removing barriers to assertive responses. This group will meet for six sessions.

Managing Your Test Anxiety: This group provides an introduction to techniques for reducing anxiety in test-taking situations. Relaxation training, effective test-taking strategies and ways to stop excessive worrying will be covered.

Are You Stressed Out?: Group members will learn better ways to manage stress. This group will meet for four to six sessions.

If interested in joining a group please call us at 450-3188 or visit us in Bernard Hall 313.

2006 UCA BEARS WOMEN'S GOLF SCHEDULE

Feb. 4-5	Tusculum/Kiawah Island Intercollegiate
March 6-7	Murray State Big River Lady Racer Classic
March 20-21	Texas A&M-Com. Pepsi Lady Lion Invitational
April 3-4	Tusculum Agnes McAmis Memorial
April 19-20	Gulf South Conference Championships

CORRECTIONS
In last week's sports section, the caption on the front-page photo of Darryl Jones was incorrect. He did not lead the Bears to a win over Delta State, UCA lost that game. Also, last week's baseball preview page should have been the 2006 baseball preview, not the 2005 preview. And Caronica Randle is averaging 21.2 ppg, not ???. We regret the errors.

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UCA returns to track after 13-year hiatus

BY RACHAEL WALDEN
Staff Writer

The UCA Women's track team awoke from its 13-year coma Saturday at 9 a.m. Same coach. New strategy. "Being our first year, we're focused on building," coach Richard Martin said. "I'm building the team around the cross-country girls, who I'm requiring to run track." The cross-country team makes up 60 percent of the 25-member team. Martin's other 10 recruits are from Arkansas and Texas. They throw the shot put, sprint the 60-meter and 200-meter, run the 400-meter, long jump and triple jump.

"As I'm able to do more recruiting, we should have a more rounded team," Martin said. "I need some hurdlers and half-milers." Although this year, UCA track won't be competing in a conference, next season the team will compete in Division I's Southland Conference. For now, they compete against teams from a variety of divisions and conferences. The Sugar Bears opened up their indoor season Saturday at the University of Kansas' Jayhawk Invitational. Freshman Tiffany Lockett finished 13th out of 32 runners in the 400-meter dash with a time of 59.53. Lockett, of Atlanta,

Texas, was recruited by Martin after winning the 3A state high school championship in the 400-meter with a 56.18 split. UCA's distance runners, sophomore Whitney Welch, freshman Michelle Pitoniak, freshman Emily Railsback, and sophomore Lauren Merritt ran 13:35.65 in the distance medley for fourth place. Freshman Rene Hooper, freshman Felicia Prince, Merritt and Welch ran 10:34.53 in the 4x800 meter relay for seventh place. In field events, freshman Lori Garside placed 18th in long jump with a jump of 15 feet, 4 inches, and 12th in triple jump with 32 feet, 8.5 inches.

Freshman Jessica Norris placed 20th in long jump with 14 feet, 4 inches, and 14th in triple jump with 32 feet, 2 inches. Freshmen Britney Hill and Chelsea Sutton threw the shot put 35 feet, 1 inch for 12th place and 28 feet, 3.75 inches for 21st place. "The freshmen aren't used to indoor, and the distance girls are still in cross-country mode," Martin said. "We ran good, but we've got to get better." Due to lack of facilities, UCA won't host any home track meets this year. Its next competition, the Missouri Southern Baymont Inn/Fazoli's Invitational will take place Friday in Joplin, Mo. at 5:30 pm.

Piggee KO'd

BY JOSH GOFF
Editor

After Mariessa Piggee passed out on the court following a devastating screen against SAU, her Sugar Bear teammates, coaches, trainers and family gathered around her - shedding tears and praying to Heaven. After that, SAU didn't have a chance in Hell. Trailing nine with 10:44 to go, SAU had momentum when Piggee, running full speed, blindly crashed into a hard screen from Latrice Booker, SAU's weighty center. "I was running full speed, ran into her and she just knocked me out," Piggee said. "It hurt a lot. I got back up, held myself and then lost it. I kinda felt it coming on as I was walking to the bench."

As Piggee lay motionless, the Lady Muleriders were a flurry of activity - carousing around the court, waving their arms to the crowd, working them into a frenzy. Somewhere along the way, they made the Sugar Bears mad - and that was that. From then on, SAU got just four field goals and UCA rolled to an 83-63 victory. "We were able to come together and get our kids refocused," UCA coach Checola Seals said. "It's not about getting even but beating them on the scoreboard." And beat them they did - as the Sugar Bears, led by Caronica Randle, went on a roll after Piggee was carted off. "I hate that it happened and Mariessa had to be taken out like that, but it just made us play harder," said Randle, who finished with 24 points and 14 rebounds. "It made us want to beat the mess out of them. We stayed calm and I had to stay calm because I knew we had to take this game home, especially it being on their home court." It got personal for Randle when, as if having a teammate lying unconscious on the court wasn't enough, SAU added insult to injury with the cheering. "They were laughing and that made us even more mad."

The smirks on their faces, it just wasn't right," she said. "They only did that because the game was close then. After that I told my team 'We've got to win by 20.' And what a coincidence, we won by 20." With the Sugar Bears given a choice of being bothered or inspired, they opted for the latter. "We enjoyed it because we did it for Mariessa," said senior center Victoria Richards. "It was unclassy to do that and then to turn around and get the crowd hyped up when you've got a girl down on the floor - we did that for her. We said we're going to do this, we're taking it and running with it and they're not getting close anymore." Richards said she'd never seen such a set of circumstances in a game. "That's the first I've ever seen a player had to get taken out on a stretcher," she said. "It was very emotional for us. We love that girl so much and we were all in tears. But, it put the fire back in us because they were coming back and then when that happened it went back aflame and we took off and said 'no, they're not even touching us.'"

The medical staff did have to touch Piggee, strapping her down as a precautionary measure - something she wasn't fond of. "I wanted to turn those people in," she said. "I was on that backboard for two hours and that wasn't good at all. I had to go to the restroom, I was about to throw up, and I was hungry - I never miss a meal." Piggee's presence was missed Monday night, though the score wouldn't indicate it. "Bottom line, it's hard to replace Piggee," Seals said. "You're talking about a kid who's a defensive specialist that gets up in your butt and harasses you. But we'll get her back." Tomorrow night? "I'll be ready for Thursday," Piggee said. "I'm coming back Thursday. Watching that game [Monday night] almost gave me a heart attack."

Tupelo From 1B

packed in there." The fourth and fifth seeds have to play first-round games against the fifth and fourth seeds from the opposite side in the tournament - meaning the first three seeds have one fewer game standing between them and a conference tournament title, serving as incentive to not only make the tournament, but to obtain a lofty seed. "You definitely want to get a tournament berth, but teams two and three get a bye so I think those are things we'd like to shoot for," Chappell said. "And, we're capable of doing that. I think 10 or 11 wins will get you second. But there are too many teams who are even. What we really need is one three or four-game winning streak. I think we're capable. It should be interesting." A look at the Bears' schedule is undeniable proof of the league's parity. At the midway mark, the Bears' five wins were by a combined 18 points, and their three losses by a total of 15 with no game decided by more than nine points. "All three losses we had a chance to win, so that makes us feel competitive with everybody, but you could probably turn that

around and we haven't been able to empty the bench against anybody," Chappell said. "It's natural that in a long, hard conference season you'll have peaks and valleys. As we head into the second round we hope to keep improving and hopefully play our best basketball of the year. We do that and we should be an upper division team." The Sugar Bears have already established themselves as an upper division team on the women's side, and find themselves in a dogfight of their own with Henderson and Delta for rights to be conference champs. "I really see it being a three-team race," Sugar Bears coach Checola Seals said. "We know we've got to go to Delta and Henderson, but that's not an issue. We also go to Ouachita, and Henderson lost to Ouachita so we know we've got to beat them and then take care of Delta - and that's very possible." The Sugar Bears' two conference losses (by a combined six points) both went to the wire and UCA held leads late in both before squandering the advantage and falling victim to the turnover plague in each. But thanks to some newfound senior leadership, natural freshman maturation

and improving team chemistry, Seals feels her team is just hitting its stride. "I look for us to have a better run this time through than the first," she said. "We went 6-2, but we expect better. We've been playing well, and we have some cohesiveness. The kids are actually communicating with each other and we're excited about that." "We've made some adjustments we needed to make, and having Micaela (Thomas, a senior from last year's team who joined this year's squad on Jan. 19) gives us a huge lift. We're starting to come together and we've got depth, and that's something we didn't have last year. It's nice to be able to get 20, 25 points from your bench. And the only thing you can do for freshmen is getting them playing time and getting their feet wet. They get that experience and they get better. It's coming. It's a slow process, but it's coming. We still haven't peaked by any means, but we're making that turn and you can see it." The Sugar Bears ended the first half of GSC play routing UAM and SAU by 19 and 20 points, respectively. Those convincing wins were the norm last year when the Sugar Bears went through the 16-game

slate virtually unscathed, a feat they'd like to duplicate in the second go-round this year. "Hopefully we knocked the wind out of some people's sails," Seals said. "We hope some of them are a little frustrated thinking 'Oh, here we go again'. Everybody comes into conference with high hopes - look at some of their records coming in. Now, flipping that around, those teams haven't won many conference games and hopefully they've lost some wind out of their sails." That couldn't be less true for the Sugar Bears, who think they should blow by the competition the rest of the way to Tupelo. "We know we screwed two wins away so now we've got to get ready to do what we've got to do," Seals said. "We didn't play well in either game. The Henderson game, anybody could've won that one. Delta ... we didn't play well and it had nothing to do with basketball. They're having a hard time scoring, it's their defense winning them games. You've just got to score and attack. Our kids know it's going to be payback for that one." "We're the University of Central Arkansas - we expect to win everything."

Rolling From 1B

Victoria Richards, who has put up 14 and 13 points in consecutive games. Monday she recorded a double-double, adding 11 rebounds. "We were a little concerned about the rebounding," Seals said. "We knew we had to get off to a good start there, and Victoria was huge." Richards assumed some

senior responsibility in stepping up for her short-handed team (missing Mariessa Piggee due to concussion and Allyson Sample, out with a stress fracture in her right foot). "I needed to step up for my team because CBU had a very good post player," she said. "I knew I had to step up my role. If I can't score, I'll rebound. If the rebounds are coming, the scoring will come. I noticed I was getting

the rebounds, but the points I didn't think about. I was just thinking 'follow shots and get in there.'" The Sugar Bears trailed 46-44 with 16:07, but were able to pull away and maintain a double-digit lead for most of the game's final 10 minutes. A big run in the SAU game put that one away, as UCA turned it on after Piggee was cold-cocked with 10:44 left - quickly extending a nine-point

lead to 17 over the next couple minutes. SAU managed only two field goals in the game's final seven minutes while the Sugar Bears continued to pour it on - scoring more in the final 30 seconds (five) than the SAU did in the last 3:00 (four). "We were able to come together and get our kids refocused," Seals said. "It's not about getting even - but beating them on the scoreboard."

WOMEN'S GULF SOUTH CONFERENCE STANDINGS

	GSC			OVERALL			
	W	L	PCT.	W	L	PCT.	STRK
Henderson State	8	1	.889	18	2	.900	W3
Delta State	7	2	.778	18	2	.900	L1
Central Arkansas	7	2	.778	15	5	.750	W3
Southern Arkansas	6	3	.667	11	9	.550	W2
Arkansas-Monticello	5	4	.556	10	9	.526	W3
Ouachita Baptist	3	6	.333	14	6	.700	L3
Christian Brothers	2	7	.222	9	10	.474	L4
Arkansas Tech	2	7	.222	10	10	.500	L2
Harding	0	8	.000	8	11	.421	L8

Six From 1B

"It seems to me Kevin Weybright put on a show," Chappell said. "He showed why he is one of the better players in the league." Phillips, who led the Bears with 30 points, agreed with Chappell. "He was on that second half," he said. "He did what he's supposed to do and stepped up for his team. He's a leader and he showed it." Weybright turned the ball over with 1:08 left and missed two big free throws, but it wasn't enough for the Bears. "He gave us a chance at the end," Phillips said. "We were trying, but some things happen during the games and we always find ourselves clawing back in." Joey Cortez, who had 7 assists and shot 4-of-9 for 9 points couldn't figure out why Weybright went off after just 7 points in the first half. "I don't know what it was," Cortez said. "We had him scouted pretty well. But you look at him and you really don't think he's that athletic and then he's beating you to the hole and gets a layup. Every time they needed a play he was making one." Even with the loss the Bears are still in the mix for a high seed in the GSC tournament. After Monday's action the Bears are in a three-way tie for third at 5-4 with Henderson State and Christian Brothers. "We're still right in the mix," Cortez said. "First place is probably out of reach now, but second place is still right there. It's going to be really tough, but we really need to get a bye in that first round."

MEN'S GULF SOUTH CONFERENCE STANDINGS

	GSC			OVERALL			
	W	L	PCT.	W	L	PCT.	STRK
Delta State	9	0	1.000	18	1	.947	W-14
Arkansas-Monticello	6	3	.667	13	7	.650	W-3
Henderson State	5	4	.556	9	8	.529	L-1
Christian Brothers	5	4	.556	11	8	.579	W-2
Central Arkansas	5	4	.556	12	7	.632	L-2
Harding	3	5	.375	11	7	.611	L-1
Ouachita Baptist	3	6	.333	11	11	.500	W-1
Southern Arkansas	3	6	.333	6	14	.300	L-2
Arkansas Tech	1	8	.111	10	10	.500	L-7

After sending Cory Green to the free-throw line four straight times the Bears went on a 6-0 run to cut the SAU lead to 48-36. Green went back to the line on SAU's next possession to push the lead back to 14. The Bears started to press and cut the lead to 53-47 with 2:10 left. Cortez converted a three-point play with 1:27 left to cut the lead to 54-50. SAU went down and scored once more, then Cortez came back with his own bucket, making it 56-52. After two missed SAU free throws, Phillips was fouled and went one-for-two to cut the lead to 56-53 with 34.7 seconds left. Two more SAU free throws from Brandon Bealer made it 60-

53 with 22.2 ticks left. But the Bears weren't done. LeMar Phillips powered one in to make it 60-55. A Mulerider turnover led to a Cortez bucket with 4.6 left to make it 60-57. UCA forced one more turnover with just 4 of a second left. The inbounds play didn't give UCA the shot it wanted and Wise had to fling one up from deep beyond the arc. Cortez finished with 14 points and 8 rebounds, after being held to only 2 rebounds and no points in the first. Phillips led the Bears with 19 points and was the only Bear contributing on the scoreboard in the first half. Green led SAU with 25 points, 17 from the free-throw line.

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'Being a Light on the Campus of UCA'



Southern Arkansas 63, UCA 60
MAGNOLIA — UCA turned what looked like one of the lowest scoring games in school history into a classic, but came up short, 63-60 at Southern Arkansas on Thursday.

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2006 SOFTBALL PREVIEW

2006 UCA BEARS SOFTBALL SCHEDULE

Feb. 11	Williams Baptist	1 p.m.
Feb. 11	Williams Baptist	3 p.m.
Feb. 14	@ Northeastern State	1 p.m.
Feb. 14	@ Northeastern State	3 p.m.
Feb. 15	@ Oklahoma	3 p.m.
Feb. 15	@ Oklahoma	5 p.m.
Feb. 17	Missouri Southern	9:30 a.m.
Feb. 17	Rockhurst	3:30 p.m.
Feb. 17	Missouri-Rolla	5:30 p.m.
Feb. 18	TBA (UCA Tournament)	9:30 a.m.
Feb. 18	TBA (UCA Tournament)	11 a.m.
Feb. 18	TBA (UCA Tournament)	1:30 p.m.
Feb. 18	TBA (UCA Tournament)	3:30 p.m.
Feb. 26	Washburn	11 a.m.
Feb. 26	Washburn	1 p.m.
Feb. 28	Northeastern State	3 p.m.
Feb. 28	Northeastern State	5 p.m.
March 4	@ Henderson State*	Noon
March 4	@ Henderson State*	2 p.m.
March 5	@ Henderson State*	1 p.m.
March 5	@ Henderson State*	3 p.m.
March 10	Ouachita Baptist*	6 p.m.
March 10	Ouachita Baptist*	8 p.m.
March 11	Ouachita Baptist*	1 p.m.
March 11	Ouachita Baptist*	3 p.m.
March 17	Kan. Wesleyan (in Pittsburg, Kan.)	Noon
March 17	Mo. Southern (in Pittsburg, Kan.)	3 p.m.
March 17	Truman State (in Pittsburg, Kan.)	4:30 p.m.
March 18	TBA (in Pittsburg, Kan.)	1:30 p.m.
March 18	Oklahoma City (in Pittsburg, Kan.)	Noon
March 24	@ Christian Brothers*	1 p.m.
March 24	@ Christian Brothers*	3 p.m.
March 25	@ Christian Brothers*	1 p.m.
March 25	@ Christian Brothers*	3 p.m.
March 28	Arkansas-Pine Bluff	5 p.m.
March 28	Arkansas-Pine Bluff	7 p.m.
March 31	@ Arkansas-Monticello*	1 p.m.
March 31	@ Arkansas-Monticello*	3 p.m.
April 1	@ Arkansas-Monticello*	1 p.m.
April 1	@ Arkansas-Monticello*	3 p.m.
April 6	West Alabama* (GSC Crossover)	6 p.m.
April 6	Alabama-Huntsville* (GSC Crossover)	8 p.m.
April 7	North Alabama* (GSC Crossover)	5 p.m.
April 7	Valdosta State* (GSC Crossover)	3 p.m.
April 8	Lincoln Memorial* (GSC Crossover)	11 a.m.
April 8	West Georgia* (GSC Crossover)	5 p.m.
April 9	West Florida* (GSC Crossover)	Noon
April 14	Delta State*	6 p.m.
April 14	Delta State*	8 p.m.
April 15	@ Delta State*	1 p.m.
April 15	Delta State*	3 p.m.
April 18	@ Missouri Southern	5 p.m.
April 18	@ Missouri Southern	7 p.m.
April 21	Southern Arkansas*	6 p.m.
April 21	Southern Arkansas*	8 p.m.
April 22	Southern Arkansas*	Noon
April 22	Southern Arkansas*	2 p.m.
April 28	@ Arkansas Tech*	Noon
April 28	@ Arkansas Tech*	2 p.m.
April 29	@ Arkansas Tech*	Noon
April 29	@ Arkansas Tech*	2 p.m.

* - Denotes GSC game



New UCA softball coach Steve Kissell discusses some strategy with his team during a practice Friday.

Josh Goff | ECHO

New-look Bears want GSC ring

BY SCOTT STIRLING
Assistant Sports Editor

When coach Steve Kissell assumed the reins of the UCA softball program in August, he knew the task at hand wasn't an easy one, but accepted the challenge with open arms.

He had one year to prepare a team that finished 19-28 a year ago for the transition to Division I and the Southland Conference. Kissell said the move to reach that level of play has already begun.

"I think we've got several players here this year that can play at [the Division I] level," Kissell said. "When we started recruiting, we went and started looking at those kids that were in that Division I category."

"We've got quite a few signees that we were competing against Division I schools for, and we jumped right in it and got right with that stuff, so I think that's a good thing and I think we can make the transition (to Division I)."

But before the Bears can compete at the next level, they are looking to go out with a bang in their last year as a member of the Gulf South Conference.

"We want to start very well, and we want to be in the conference race the whole year," Kissell said. "We'd like to win the conference like everyone else does. Right now everyone in the country is undefeated, and I think we've got as good a chance as anyone to do well."

Kissell, who comes to UCA from Oklahoma Panhandle State, said his team hasn't showed any distinct weaknesses as of yet, and brings a good group attitude to the plate.

"There's some areas that we're better in, but I don't know that we have what is really a weakness," he said. "We've got a lot of players that do a really good job that are working really hard."

"Our strengths, I think, are just overall hard work and I think we've got a lot of talent. It's just a matter of being the right place at the right time and the right combination is another big deal."

Another strong point of his squad, Kissell said, is their team speed.



Freshman outfielder Christy Holford warms up before taking her spot in the batter's box Friday.

Josh Goff | ECHO

The other aspects of the game seem to be coming along nicely, also.

"Hitting is coming around, we're happy about the way that's going," Kissell said. "Defense has been very good so far; practices we've had our ups and downs, but overall, we've done pretty well. Pitching is getting better everyday; they're getting more comfortable with what they're throwing."

Kissell is beginning his 18th year as a college softball head coach, and he says UCA is unlike any other place he's been.

"UCA is everything the other places are not, on a positive side," he said. "We've got a lot of things going here - we've got size, we've got the city of Conway which is very supportive and I think we have a super administration."

The Bears begin their season on Feb. 11 when they host Williams Baptist.

2006 UCA BEARS SOFTBALL

HEAD COACH
Steve Kissell
1st Season



OUTFIELDERS

- 1 • Christy Holford 5-7, Jr.
- 2 • Erika Okarski 5-4, Sr.
- 14 • Shayla Williams 5-3, Fr.
- 20 • Lauren Wilson 5-2, Soph.
- 21 • Sarah Hinton 5-7, Soph.

SHORTSTOP

- 15 • Jamie Terry 5-9, Soph.
- 23 • Devin McWayne 5-6, Fr.

SECOND BASE

- 18 • Maegan Bell 5-1, Jr.
- 27 • Katie Snyder 5-6, Soph.

FIRST BASE

- 22 • Marquita Smith 5-9, Sr.
- 19 • Amanda Burgess 5-7, Fr.
- 24 • Jessica Sanders 5-8, Soph.

THIRD BASE

- 8 • Jessica Maland 5-6, Soph.
- 33 • Nicole Sherrell 5-7, Jr.
- 34 • Jacklin Langston 5-5, Fr.

PITCHERS

- 5 • Natalie Faulkner 5-4, Jr. RHP
- 7 • Katti Bowen 5-6, Jr. RHP
- 16 • Holly Vance 6-0, Fr. RHP
- 19 • Amanda Burgess 5-7, Fr. RHP
- 24 • Jessica Sanders 5-8, Soph. RHP

CATCHERS

- 12 • Sarah Scalia 5-0, Jr.
- 9 • Jessica Silver 5-7, Fr.
- 11 • Amber Jolly 5-7, Jr.

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Coaching change came at perfect time for Bears

The UCA softball team's season opener on Feb. 11 will begin the second decade of Bear softball and will also be the first time the Bears will be led onto the field with a new head coach.

Steve Kissell was hired to take over the Bears after Natalie Shock, the only softball coach in UCA history, resigned to take a new position in athletic administration.

Kissell certainly has all the impressive stats that folks generally drool over when a new coach is hired.

He has an overall record of 453-426 in his 17 years of softball coaching. He has been named conference coach of the year six

times, district coach of the year twice, he's won six conference championships and once won a district championship. He's also reached the NAIA quarterfinals.

So, he obviously knows his softball. But, often times a new coach can be so much more than knowing the sport and molding the players into winners and great people. New coaches provide a breath of fresh air to programs.

Shock did a fine job building the program from the ground up, and will never be forgotten as UCA softball coach. After 10 seasons, though, she decided it was time to move on. I don't know what her motivation was, but I'm fairly certain she



KAI CADDY
Caddy Corner

wouldn't have left the team if she didn't feel it was in the team's best interest.

Coaches know when it's time to move on for the most part.

If a coach sticks around longer than he or she should, things just don't go well. It's tougher to come back from a string of miserable seasons.

I think the shift in UCA softball happened at just the

right time. The Bears haven't had a miserable season since I've been in school, but they also haven't had a glorious run in the Gulf South.

Enter a new coach.

Kissell inherits a team that was 19-28 last season and 11-17 in the GSC. The Bears still had a shot to be in the GSC tournament until the last weekend of the season. With a couple of All-GSC players returning in Marquita Smith and Maegan Bell plus lots of youth, the last season in Division II could be a good one.

Even if it's not, the Bears should be in great shape going into the transition to Division I.

Only Smith and Erika Okarski

are seniors on this year's squad. Everyone else should return and Kissell has already signed nine players to letters of intent. Thanks to his Oklahoma ties he is plucking player after player from there, with six of his nine signees hailing from the Sooner state.

To me the changing of the guard of UCA softball couldn't have come at a better time and things are looking good for the program.

On Feb. 15 the Bears take on Oklahoma in a double-header. It's not every year you see a Big 12 school on any UCA athletic schedule. But get used to it, it'll be commonplace soon enough.