Kings of the NJCAA
Sullivan’s overtime victory caps an improbable season
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Executive Decision
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A Team of Destiny?
Upset moves Sullivan into finals
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Chief Executives:
Sullivan captures junior college title
The Courier-Journal

Sullivan Passes National Title Test
The Hutchinson News
Executives Bring Home National Title!

The 1995-96 basketball season began with 282 Division I junior college teams dreaming of a national championship. After the first round of the last game of the season, there was only one team left — the Sullivan College Executives!

The Executives brought home their first National Junior College Athletic Association championship title after rolling over four ranked teams in the national tournament held recently in Hutchinson, Kansas. The unranked Executives defeated #5 Utah Valley State 97-89 in the first round, #1 Indian Hills (IA) 87-85 in the second round, #7 Butler County (KS) 97-89 in the semifinals, and #15 Allegany (MD) 104-98 in overtime in the championship game.

A Slow Start

After getting off to an uninspiring 5-8 start, the Executives won 22 of their final 24 games, finishing their remarkable season with a 27-10 record and the NJCAA national championship. Despite having the worst record in the 16-team field (23-10), Sullivan became the first Kentucky college to win the NJCAA championship since Paducah in 1969.

Previous Tournament Appearances

The Executives have won 11 Kentucky Junior College Athletic Conference championships and three Region VII championships. Before joining the NJCAA, Sullivan College was the only team to win the National Little College Athletic Association (NCAAA) championship an unprecedented four times (1967, 1968, 1969 and 1980). In two previous trips to NJCAA national tournaments, the team finished 12th in 1992 and 11th in 1993.

New Head Coach Leads the Way

After serving five years as both an assistant and associate head coach, Gary Shours did what thousands of other coaches can only dream about — he took over the reins and led his team to a national championship in his first year as a head coach. "I couldn't have accomplished this without my two excellent assistant coaches, Charlie Ligon and Glenn Collie," said Coach Shours. "They played a major role in this team's success.

This team has quality players who know how to win," said Sullivan College President A.R. Sullivan. "But, it took a strong personality like Gary Shours to get them to play together." Individual Honors

The Executives also had their share of individual honors at the national tournament. Coach Shours was named both tournament and NJCAA Coach of the Year. Eric Martin, a 6-5 forward from Fairdale High School, earned tournament MVP honors. Martin scored 93 points in the four-game tournament, including 26 in the championship game to go along with seven rebounds and six assists. Martin and former Fairdale teammate Rashawn Morris, a 6-2 guard, also were named to the All-Tournament Team.

Welcome Home

As the emotionally and physically drained players and coaches exited the bus following their return to campus after the tournament, they were greeted by cheering fans. Crews from all four Louisville television stations eagerly got interviews for the evening newscasts.

State Representa-
tive Allen Maricle, a former Executive player, invited the team to the state capitol in Frankfort. Governor Paul Patton met the team and college representatives and congratulated them on their success. The Sullivan delegation then introduced to both the House and Senate, where they received standing ovations and proclama-
tions were read into the official record.
Winning has its rewards. After leading the unranked and underdog Sullivan College Executives to their first NJCAA national championship in his first year as head coach, Gary Shouards was voted the 1996 Division 1 National Junior College Coach of the Year by the National Association of Basketball Coaches.

Coach Shouards and representatives from Sullivan College recently traveled to New York City for the awards presentation ceremony. Also attending the ceremony was University of Massachusetts Head Coach John Calipari who was there to receive his award for being named NCAA Division 1 Coach of the Year.

Congratulations to Coach Shouards, Coach Ligon, Coach Collie and the Executives!

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University of Louisville Head Coach Denny Crum (left), a member of the Basketball Hall of Fame and Vice President of the National Association of Basketball Coaches, congratulates Sullivan College Head Coach Gary Shouards on being voted NJCAA Coach of the Year.

The Road to the National Championship

It took a seven-game winning streak against some of the nation’s top junior college basketball teams for the Sullivan College Executives to realize their dream of winning their first NJCAA national championship.

The Executives still needed to win the KJAC tournament to advance to the regional qualifying tournament. Down by two points at halftime of the championship game, the Execs forced 14 second half turnovers and pulled away to a 90-76 win over Lee College. The team was paced by Elton Scott who finished the game with 16 points, nine assists and five rebounds, and Rashawn Morris who had 29 points and three steals.

At the Region VII tournament in Gallatin, Tennessee, the Execs went up against two of the region’s top teams in Shelby State and Walters State. Sullivan had five players in double figures in their 119-94 semifinal victory over Shelby State. Rashawn Morris scored 22 points; Ed Jenkins, who has signed a national letter-of-intent to play for the Big 10’s Ohio State University, added 21 points; Eric Martin scored 20 points; Elton Scott dropped in 18 points; and Chucky Baker added 10 points.

The Executives earned their third trip to the National Junior College Athletic Association National Tournament in Hutchinson, Kansas, with a 94-86 victory over Walters State in the Region VII championship game. The Execs once again had five players in double figures, led by Stephan Shackles, Morris and Scott who each had 17 points, Martin with 15 points and Jenkins with 13 points.

National Champion

Sullivan’s unranked Executives faced four of the nation’s top ranked teams in their march to the national championship in Hutchinson. In the first round, the Execs downed fifth-ranked Utah Valley by a final score of 97-89. The team was led by Shackles with 18 points, Martin with 11 rebounds and Scott with six assists.

Round two brought the Executives face-to-face with the country’s number one team, Indian Hills (Iowa). The Execs won this thriller 87-85 on a three-point shot by Baker with only 38 seconds left in the game. The team was paced by Morris with 27 points and Martin, who added 26 points. Shackles led the team in rebounding with eight boards.

The semifinals pitted the Execs against seventh-ranked Butler County from Kansas. Led by Martin with 25 points, Morris with nine rebounds and Baker’s five assists, the Execs moved on to the championship game with a 97-89 victory.

The championship game against number 15 Allegany (Maryland) was a real barn burner, with the Executives pulling out a 104-98 victory in overtime. The Execs once again had a balanced attack, with five players in double figures — Scott led the way with 27 points; Martin had 26; Shackles added 20 points as well as pulling down a team-leading 11 boards; and Morris and Corey Douglas with 10 points each.