

CWEDNESDAY
MARCH 1, 2006The News Journal
WILMINGTON, DEL.Updates and latest news
www.delawareonline.com

Sports

News tips: 324-2801 or sports@delawareonline.com ...



SMASH-ING RETURN?

Pete Sampras says he will play World Team Tennis this year. Smash officials say they have a "50-50" chance of drafting him. **C3**

DELAWARE AT PLAY, **C2**
BASEBALL, **C3**
HIGH SCHOOLS, **C4**
SCOREBOARD, **C5**
FOOTBALL, **C6**
BASKETBALL, **C6**

STATE HIGH SCHOOL BOYS BASKETBALL TOURNAMENT

They were the first overtime champions

Howard's 1996 winners overcame slow start, stuck together as team to win state crown

TODAY'S FIRST ROUND

ALL GAMES, 6 P.M.

- (17) Christiana vs. (16) Howard at Dickinson
- (24) Indian River at (9) Caesar Rodney
- (20) Woodbridge at (13) William Penn
- (21) Newark at (12) Salesianum
- (18) Polytech at (15) Brandywine
- (23) Red Lion Christian at (10) Delcastle
- (19) A.I. du Pont at (14) Sussex Tech
- (22) Smyrna vs. (11) Delmarva Christian at Milford

By JACK IRELAND
The News Journal

In the first eight games of the 1995-96 season, Howard High didn't look like a state championship-caliber basketball team.

Howard, a preseason No. 2 pick in The News Journal's Top 10, lost five games by early January, including two at the Slam Dunk to the Beach Tournament in Lewes.

However, two months later, this wasn't the same team. Led by 6-foot-5 senior DeCoursey Jamison, the Wildcats rallied to beat top-ranked Cape Henlopen 67-63 in the first overtime boys final. Howard finished 20-6, winning 17 of its last 18 games.

As the 40th boys tournament opens tonight with eight first-round games, Paul Brown remembers a team that captured the Flight B crown, the Blue Hen Conference title and had big tournament wins over Dover and St. Mark's to reach the final.

"We went down to the Slam Dunk with a superstar [Jamison] and high expectations for the season," said

See HOWARD — **C4**

1996 state champion Howard boys basketball team: (Front row, from left) Jorge Rivera, Richard Hamlin, Robert Young, Takia Lum (manager) (Middle row, from left) coach Mark Sills, Clarence Williams, Demetrius White, Julius Inge, Steve Henderson, coach Darrin Kellam. (Back row, from left) head coach Paul Brown, James Smith, Vandrick Hamlin, Terron Mason, DeCoursey Jamison.

Howard: 'It was a team thing' that propelled Wildcats to '96 crown

FROM PAGE C1

Brown, who guided Howard to three Final Fours (1996, '97, 2001) during his nine years as coach. "We had a rough start. We had a team meeting in a cold gym that night when we got back. The guys made a commitment to play harder as a team. I challenged them to become a team and not to do what you want as individuals."

Jamison, who had 1,069 points and 546 rebounds in just two seasons, turned in one of the all-time best state final efforts with 31 points and 23 rebounds against Cape. Jamison went on to play two years of junior college basketball and two years as a starter at Lynn University in Boca Raton, Fla., an

NCAA Division II team.

"I think we owe it all to the coaching staff," said Jamison, who averaged 22 points and 11 rebounds that year. "Coach and his staff prepared us and groomed us in every way possible for the playoffs. We knew we had something special, and to accomplish our goals, we had to stay focused as one."

Brown's assistant coaches were Darrin Kellam and Mark Sills.

In the final against Cape, starters Nate Allen, Clarence Williams and point guard Demetrius White fouled out in regulation. Senior forward Terron Mason was the fifth starter.

"DeCoursey was awesome and wanted to carry the team on his back,"

Brown said. "He also was able to look for other guys who could feed to the open player and also penetrate to the basket. Everyone knew their roles."

Julius Inge, Steve Henderson, Vandrick Hamlin and James Smith stepped up to help Jamison rally the Wildcats past a battered and out-manned Cape team in overtime.

"In practice, it was never starters against reserves," said Jamison, now a businessman and youth counselor in Boca Raton. "Coach split the teams up and we were one unit. When we got in a game of that caliber [against Cape], I never felt we were a lesser team. I was never worried at all, because we were prepared for it."

"The coaches not only groomed us for the games, but [told us] what to say and not to say around the media. We became smart on and off the court."

Senior Lamont Hazzard was brilliant for Cape with 30 points, 23 in the second half. He scored all 13 of Cape's third-quarter points. Cape just missed winning the game in regulation. Forward Cory Clouser was fouled with one second left, but he made only one of three foul shots, tying the game.

"I remember two starting guards fouling out and Bobby Leggins getting hurt," said Cape Henlopen coach Jerry Peden Sr., who retired in 2002 after 30 years of coaching in Delaware. "Bobby, with his head bandaged up, moved in

and played point guard. Jamison, he was a tremendous player, dominating. Despite the loss, I have fond memories of that game and of the season."

Allen, an ex-Marine from Claymont, said the players fed off Jamison's confidence.

"Every player put egos aside, and it became a fun thing," Allen said. "We knew DeCoursey was our go-to person, and he instilled confidence in us. We pushed him as much as he pushed us. When Demetrius, Clarence and I fouled out, it came back to the team thing. That night, we knew we were a good, complete basketball team. ... It was a team thing."

Contact jack ireland at 324-2808 or jireland@delawareonline.com.