

UNR gets Las Vegas Bowl bid in first I-A season

by Paul Gutierrez

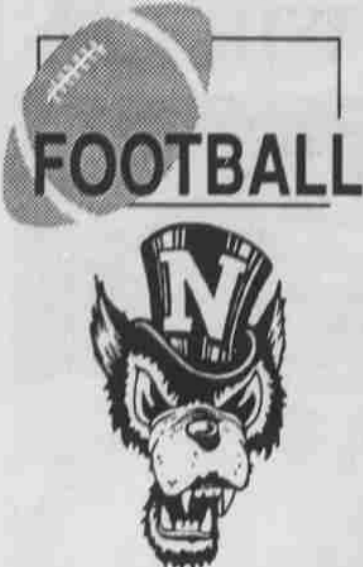
For Coach Chris Ault and the University of Nevada Wolf Pack, the waiting game was the most heart-wrenching "game" of the season.

Nevada, the Big West Conference champion in its first season in the league at 5-1 and 7-4 overall, had to wait and see if the NCAA would waive Regulation 30.9.2 which requires "all post-season bowl participants to have at least six Division I-A victories." The Wolf Pack had just five wins against such foes.

On Nov. 23, at the announcement of the Las Vegas Bowl, the governing body of college athletics granted a waiver and left it up to the Big West to decide its representative in the inaugural bowl game. The conference decided to send its champion, Nevada, thus giving the game a local flavor.

"I think there are times when common sense prevails in the NCAA," Ault said with a smile during the conference. "I feel strongly, regardless of records, that the conference champions should represent the conference in a closed bowl game such as this."

Nevada will face the Mid-American Conference champion Bowling Green Falcons at the Sam Boyd Silver Bowl, Dec. 18. The Falcons won the MAC going



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undefeated at 8-0, 9-2 overall. The lack of Division I-A games on Nevada's schedule is due to the sudden move of the Wolf Pack from the Division I-AA Big Sky Conference to the BWC this year. The Reno-based school has now won three straight conference championships, counting this season.

"The city of Reno, the community of Northern Nevada is just busting at the seams," Ault said. "All we could do was sit and wait. This has been a storybook season for us and this is the final chapter (playing in the Las Vegas Bowl). We're just excited to be in our own state and to have



Chris Ault

the opportunity to play." Coach Ault feels Nevada's role in the NCAA decision is history-in-the-making and the Wolf Pack is part of it.

"It's a major precedent, no doubt," he said. "The University of Nevada played a major role in this. It's kind of neat.

"But it's a thrill. Our first year in conference, playing in a bowl game in our own home state. The bottom line is if you're champions of your conference, you should go."

GAME 1

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the game."

What Titus did for the inside, Hogg did for the outside. Having just returned from her native Australia, Hogg had been awake 40 straight hours prior to tip-off. Bolla expected light duty for the junior college transfer, but ended up leaving her in for 27 minutes.

While directing the offense with nine points and a game-high seven assists, Hogg's real contribution came on defense. She and fellow Australian teammate Trudie Hopgood had four steals apiece, including a pair that broke up a 10-2 run by the Lady Macs.

"We're real fortunate to have some really basketball savvy players," Bolla said. "That's going to help us."

Another junior-college transfer who was able to step in right away was forward Vivian Johnson (nine points, 13 rebounds). Her quick outlet pass led to three fastbreak layups. She and teammate Teresa Jackson fed the running game all night with baseball-style passes that led to open shots.

"That's going to be a big part of our offense," Bolla said. "We wanted our outlet passes to be at least 15 to 20 feet."

At times, however, the Lady Rebels had trouble finishing their plays, sometimes costing the team an easy basket. UNLV totaled 24 turnovers, one more than

UTC.

"We have these little lapses where we don't concentrate," Bolla said. "I thought we could have probably had five more layups."

Of anyone, Jackson (10 points, eight rebounds) had the most problems with the shortjumper. The Lady Macs used a number of defensive gimmicks to slow down the All-American candidate, who shot only two for 11.

"She wasn't squaring her body to the basket," Bolla said. "We have an expression, 'shooting the gun before loading it'. That's what she was doing."

With UTC focused on Jackson, the Lady Rebels looked to the perimeter for half-court scoring opportunities. The responsibility fell upon Hopgood and Gwynn Hobbs, who scored 18 points each. Hobbs hit four of five from three-point range.

A seven-deep roster should be of particular value to the Lady Rebs, who showed obvious signs of fatigue in the closing minutes. Had the starters been forced to play most of the game, the results may have been disastrous for UNLV.

"We finished the game with four timeouts. We usually use two," Bolla said.

The addition of Hogg and Hopgood and the emergence of Titus could allow Bolla to rest his starters longer, keeping them fresh throughout the game.

RUNNIN' REBS

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Villanova assistant John Olive (in his first season at LMU).

Rider made two of four three-point shots, was nine of nine from the free-throw line and had eight rebounds for the Rebels. Evrie Gray added 19 points and pulled down nine rebounds.

Mazurie led the Lions with 19. Zan Mason a 6-7 transfer

from UCLA scored 16.

The victory extended UNLV's nation's-longest win streak to 24 games.

The Rebels' next game is Saturday at San Diego State. The Aztecs—2-26 last year—were blown out by the University of San Diego, 85-60 Friday. The Rebels' first home game is Dec. 26 against Marquette.

JOHNSON

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Division I.

"It's always been this way to me," she said. "I've always wanted to play at (Division I). I always did more and worked at extra things because I knew I wanted to go (to Division I)."

Not for a minute has Johnson felt intimidated by the tougher competition. As her competition heats up, so does she, step for step.

"I like to play with good people," she said. "If they're good, I'm good. It all mixes in together. Once I get comfortable, you'll see a lot more of me and hear a lot more about me."



7-Up Desert Classic All-Tournament Team

- Teresa Jackson, UNLV
- Chris Enger, San Diego
- Tammy Dowdell, Tennessee-Chattanooga
- Shayrona Mifflin, Alabama-Birmingham
- Tonya Scott, Alabama-Birmingham

Most Valuable Player - Trudie Hopgood, UNLV

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