

Rebels Put It Together

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Forty minutes. That's all any coach asks of his basketball team—just play hard for 40 minutes.

Over most of this season, the UNLV men's basketball team looked incapable of playing good basketball for 40 minutes. When asked what the problem was, coaches Cle Edwards and Dave Rice would shrug their shoulders—at a loss to explain the lapses.

Last weekend the Runnin' Rebels put aside their bad habits, beating UC Santa Barbara, 77-72, on Mar. 2, and Long Beach State, 92-75, on Saturday to end the regular season at 11-15, 7-11 in Big West play.

"We played for 40 minutes," Edwards said after the UCSB game. "It was the first time this year. But as a team—we've been playing that way all year. These kids have been improving all along, but they've been measured on wins and losses. You can't measure them on character, and that's the thing that you're going to see."

UNLV dominated LBSU, never trailing in the second half, and shot a season-high 63 percent from the field. Reggie Manuel and Clayton Johnson led the Rebels, each scoring 25 points on 8-11 shooting, including a combined 8-12 on 3-point attempts.

The 49ers climbed to within two points, 62-60, with 6:44 to play. But the Rebels, behind 5,937 vocal fans, were able to thwart the 49ers' rush, outscoring LBSU 30-15 down the stretch.

Manuel said the fans deserve some of the credit for the win. "We came through for them; they came through for us," Manuel said. "If they just keep coming out and supporting us—we could go a long way."

On Mar. 2, UNLV held off a late UCSB surge to secure the 77-72

Big West Players of the Year since UNLV's admittance

- 1983 Sidney Green UNLV
- 1984 Richie Adams UNLV
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- 1986 Greg Grant Utah State
Anthony Jones UNLV
- 1987 Armon Gilliam UNLV
- 1988 Brian Shaw UC Santa Barbara
- 1989 Stacey Augmon UNLV
- 1990 Larry Johnson UNLV
- 1991 Larry Johnson UNLV
- 1992 Lucius Davis UC Santa Barbara
- 1993 J.R. Rider UNLV
- 1994 Kebu Stewart UNLV
- 1995 Eric Franson Utah State

win.

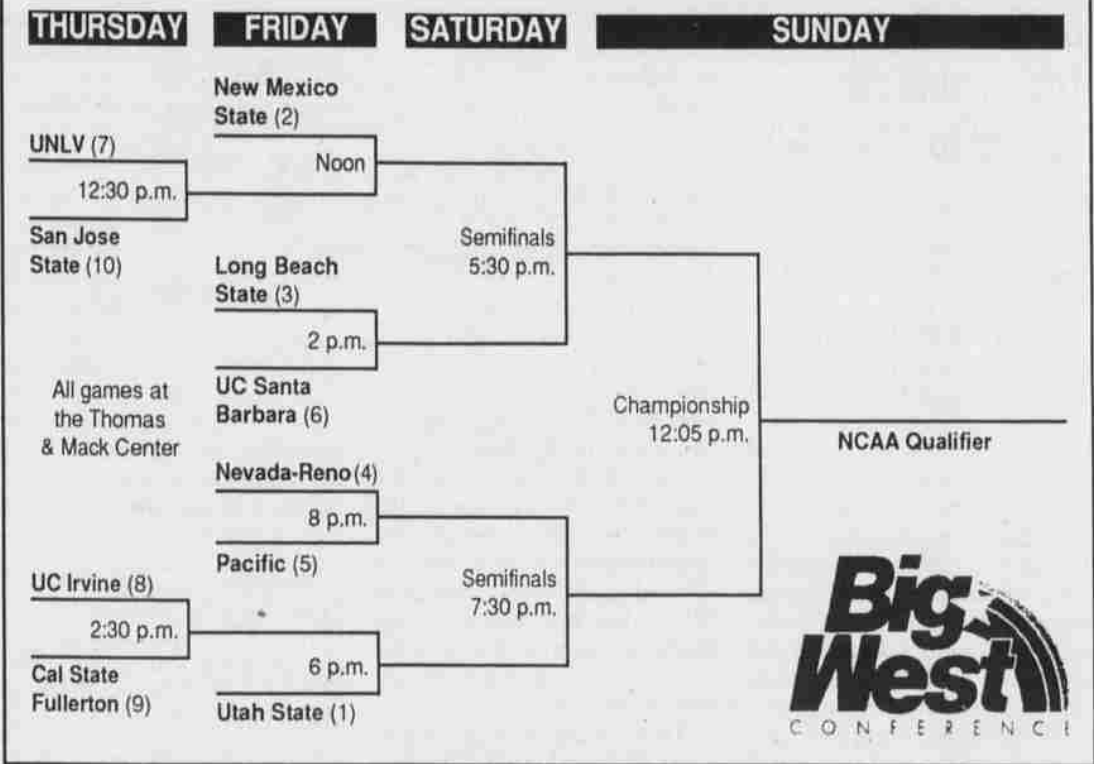
The Rebels held a 59-47 lead with 9:56 left before the Gauchos went on a 12-2 run over the next 2:56 to cut the lead to 61-59.

With the score at 71-67 UNLV, and 1:13 left, UCSB tried to cut the lead by sending the Rebels to the free-throw line. That strategy backfired as UNLV hit 6-7 free throws to seal the victory.

Patrick Savoy led a balanced attack by scoring 21 points and corraling 10 rebounds. Manuel broke his mini-slump by adding 19, while Johnson contributed 15.

"I think tonight, for the first time all year, we were able to put it together," Edwards said. "If these kids can take this, and go forward, we still have a chance."

Big West Men's Basketball Tournament



Rebirth

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four days, a lack of depth could present problems for the Rebels. Assistant coach Dave Rice said if the Rebels can get through Saturday, they'll be alright.

"The Friday game is at 12:00, provided we get to Friday," Rice said. "And if we can beat New Mexico State, and that will be a difficult chore, we don't play again until 5:30 the next night. So from a fatigue standpoint, I think we've got a chance."

Although the Rebels are lacking in numbers, interim coach Cle Edwards said UNLV will continue to do the things that got them victories last weekend: increase the tempo when the opportunities present themselves, and play full-court pressure man-to-man defense.

"We have no choice," Edwards said. "Either we run out of gas, or they run out of gas. It'll just be who's tank is bigger."

Rice said a lot of the team's success last weekend resulted from improved ball movement on offense.

"I think it's important that we continue to reverse the basketball," Rice said. "Certainly with our depth, we don't need to be taking a lot of quick jump shots."

Depth aside, many Big West coaches feel UNLV could cause major problems for the competition. Even after their poor showing this season, some Rebel players feel they are even expected to win it.

"We've got a lot of people expecting us to win it anyway," senior forward Patrick Savoy said. "I was reading the paper today (Tuesday), and it had a lot of stuff talking about 'Dangerous Rebels' and all that. I think it's going to have teams coming in kind of scared."

UNLV players expressed beliefs that they will only go as far as the community takes them.

"The fans are going to be a big part in how far we really go this weekend," junior guard Damian Smith said. "They really helped us Thursday and Saturday night this past weekend. They helped us get through those wins. They picked us up when we were down. And they're going to play a pivotal role this weekend too."

A small, but vocal, crowd of 5,937 rallied UNLV to its 92-75 victory over Long Beach State Saturday. According to the players, more of the same will be needed this weekend.

"Without them, it will be real tough," Johnson said. "It'll be a road game without them."

Another variable in the Rebels' success is Manuel. After scoring a combined six points in losses at SJSU and Pacific two weeks ago, the fourth-year Rebel bounced

back to score 44 points over the two home wins last week.

"It's important that we keep Reggie Manuel involved," Rice said. "One of the main reasons for our success the last two games has been the fact that we've been able to get Reggie off to good starts. And it seems like everyone else has followed his example."

For seniors Manuel, Savoy and Mike Curtis, one more loss ends their collegiate careers, as well as the Rebels' season. But four more wins—how sweet would that be to the team?

"That would be the icing on the cake," said Smith, a native Las Vegas. "That would make everything we've been through this year really worth it. ...That's what Las Vegas and the community needs, as well as ourselves, is to get back into the tournament."

Probable UNLV starters: forwards Clayton Johnson (13.6

ppg, 4.2 rpg) and Patrick Savoy (14.8 ppg, 7.3 rpg), center Eric Lee (2.8 ppg, 3.7 rpg), and guards Reggie Manuel (12.7 ppg, 3.0 apg) and Damian Smith (12.2 ppg, 2.2 rpg).

Probable SJSU starters: forwards Marmet Williams (5.8 ppg, 3.2 rpg) and Darren Greene (9.0 ppg, 5.2 rpg), center Mike Brotherton (9.1 ppg, 4.6 rpg), and guards Tito Addison (7.9 ppg, 2.0 apg) and Brad Quinet (13.0 ppg, 3.2 rpg).

Notes: Utah State enters the tournament as the No. 1 seed after claiming its first Big West regular season championship since 1980.

This was the first season UNLV didn't sweep one conference opponent in head-to-head competition since the Rebels joined the then-Pacific Coast Athletic Association at the start of the 1982-83 season.

The Rebels haven't won the tournament since 1991, when they defeated Fresno State in the championship 98-74, improving to 30-0 on the season.

Nevada-Reno enters the tournament as the hottest team in the conference having won four straight games, and six of its last seven, the sole loss coming at NMSU, 91-90, on Feb. 16.

Savoy was announced as "Runnin' Rebel of the Year" before Saturday's game.

Big West Men's Final Basketball Standings

	Conference	Overall
Utah State	14-4	21-6
New Mexico State	13-5	22-8
Long Beach State	13-5	17-9
UNR	12-6	16-10
Pacific	9-9	14-12
UC Santa Barbara	8-10	13-13
UNLV	7-11	11-15
UC Irvine	6-12	11-15
Cal State Fullerton	5-13	7-19
San Jose State	3-15	4-22

Hats

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leg work of the search committee.

"Sometime in the very near future we will start contacting (schools) and ask permission to talk to (candidates).

"We've got to get it done in the next week to 10 days," Weaver said.

Both Weaver and Guinn are outgoing in their respective offices as Weaver will be leaving June 30 and President-elect Carol Harter assumes office in July.

"Some might say that there's irony in our doing the (search and hiring)," Weaver said. "But we are the people in the roles at the current time and this situation needs to be addressed."

And though Weaver could not comment on who has contacted the university regarding the position, the rumor mill as been churning.

Among those rumored to be interested: second-year Utah State coach Larry Eustachy. Eustachy, 39, led the Aggies to their first regular season conference title since 1980 after three years as the head man at Idaho.

Ironically, Eustachy served as an assistant in 1989-90 at Ball State. The Cardinals gave UNLV its closest game, 69-67, on the Rebels' way to the National Championship; UCLA assistant Lorenzo Romar, 35. The No. 1 Bruins' top recruiter is credited with bringing Charles O'Bannon and other recruits to Westwood; San Diego coach Brad Holland, who was at Cal State Fullerton last year; Purdue's Gene Keady and Texas Christian's Billy Tubbs.

Interim Rebel coach Cle Edwards has also expressed interest in running things on a permanent level. Also, a group of former players that include Sidney Green, Ricky Sobers and Reggie Theus wants to be part of the decision-making process.

But no matter what happens, Weaver said he wants to have the coaching matter solved by the end of March.

"We'd like to have someone who has West Coast recruiting ties," he said. "Someone who plays an up tempo offense like the Rebels have always played and has great communications skills not only with the players but also a good rapport with the media."