

# Seawolves make good showing in Shootout

by Paul Tony  
for the *Tundra Times*

Every year, since the Great Alaska Shootout began in 1978, the University of Alaska Anchorage (UAA) Seawolves step onto the hardwood floor of the Sullivan Arena and into the spotlight of national television -- sometimes becoming the Thanksgiving weekend giant killers of the college basketball world.

UAA's NCAA Division II players compete against some of the finest Division I basketball programs in the country.

This year was no exception with 1996 defending national champion Kentucky Wildcats and runner up Syracuse Orangemen facing off on the second night of the tournament.

The Wildcats, coached by former New York Knicks Rick Pitino, faced off against Syracuse on national television in a game Kentucky won 53 to 87. Kentucky, ranked third in nation, had been upset earlier in the month by 20th ranked Clemson in a tournament in Indianapolis.

The game was not a rematch of last year's title match, however, because Kentucky had lost four and Syracuse had lost one of their players to the NBA.

After the game, Pitino talked about the complex Kentucky system of defense noting that: "You could work early in the season just on man to man and try to get good at it and then put in some other wrinkles as the season goes on, but we try to learn our white press, our black press, our double fist press, then we go man, then we go zone -- so a lot of times, it doesn't look good early."

Kentucky looked good early and late, despite what Pitino said.

But surely, you say, every tournament

must have a 'chump' team?

Jack Peterson, UAA's NCAA faculty representative, was speaking with University of Maine head coach, Dr. John Giannini, who gave the following formula for finding the 'chump': "When you get invited to a tournament and you look for the 'chump' team and you don't find them, then its time to start looking in the mirror."

In a game which was televised on ESPN, the Maine Black Bears, though certainly not chumps, faced off against UAA after the Kentucky - Syracuse game. The Seawolves won by a score of 75 to 65.

It was a game in which Seawolf guard and former Kotzebue High School Star Butch Lincoln grabbed a career high 8 rebounds prompting him to say in the post-game interview: "I'll take them anyway I can get them."

This set up a game between UAA and defending national champs Kentucky.

As much as the loyal Seawolf fans wanted the Cinderella team of the tournament to pull off the upset, it was not in the cards. Although UAA did a credible job against the Kentucky press defense, the speed and quickness of Kentucky was too much for them, and the Seawolves were down by 15 at the half.

In the second half UAA coach Bruns conceded defeat with twelve minutes remaining, benching his starters to rest them for the following night's game against nationally-ranked Stanford who had lost to the College of Charleston (S.C.) in the second round.

After the game Bruns noted that, "We like to play fast, but not that fast."

Pitino quipped, "If you don't defend against this (UAA) team's three-pointers, they'll put your lights out."

UAA's patented three point shot didn't show up for the Stanford game, however. If it had, the Wolves might have had a chance.

UAA played zone in the first half because Bruns was concerned about the height advantage that Stanford had on the inside with 7 foot 1 inch center Tim Young.

Although Stanford capitalized on the zone defense by swinging the ball to the weak side for the open three-pointer, UAA went into the locker room at half-time down by just 8 points.

In the second half, Bruns went to a man-to-man defense to try and answer the three-point problem and Stanford began to dominate on the inside.

Stanford's big men started getting second and third shot opportunities or getting fouled and making three point plays from the free throw line.

Final score: 69-71 Stanford.

Player of the game for Stanford was senior guard Brevin Knight who came into the game with some national recognition which proved to be well deserved.

UAA had to be proud to take fifth place in a tournament of Division I teams and have since been elevated to a national ranking of 4th in Division II as a result of their performance in the Shootout.

Do the Wolves deserve that ranking?

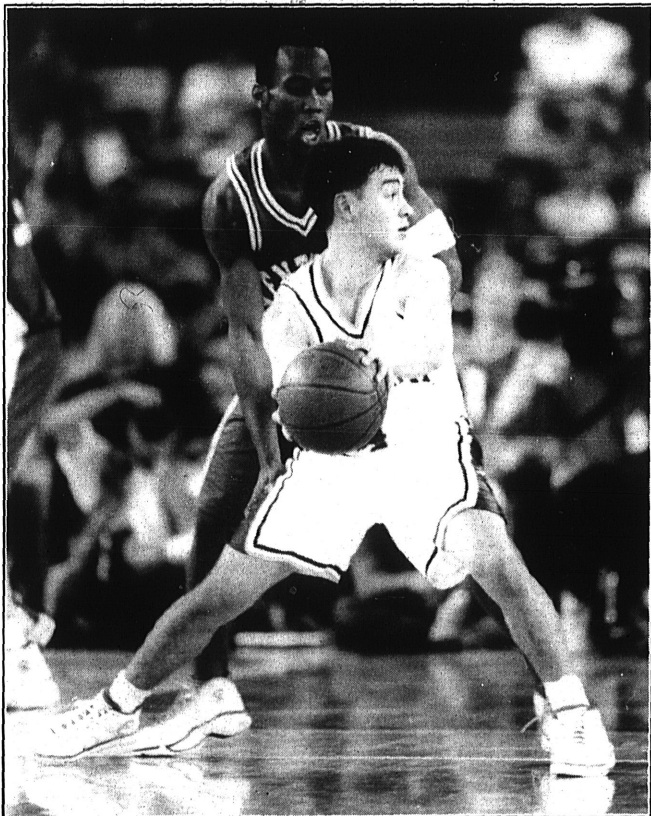
Judge for yourself. They met Shaw university for two games in the Sports Center at UAA Dec. 13 and 14 and dominated both games winning 114 to 79 in their first meeting and breaking 100 points again in their second win over Shaw.

Upcoming games out of state in the Seton Hall Tournament should confirm UAA's standing if they continue their excellent play.

The championship game of the Shootout was between Kentucky and the upstart College of Charleston, a team that played with exceptional heart in the early rounds, but proved to be overachievers down the stretch as they lost to Kentucky.

The number three spot in the tournament went to Stanford in their win over UAA while the Syracuse Orangemen took fourth place in a 56-73 win over sixth place University of North Carolina at Greensboro.

Arizona State University and Maine placed seventh and eighth place respectively.



UAA's Butch Lincoln faced tough opponents in the defending NCAA champion Kentucky Wildcats during the Great Alaska Shootout in Anchorage in November.

Photo by Ray Solomon