

# Adelphi Men's Basketball Preparing for Tournament

By Leslie Feffer

The Adelphi University Men's basketball team has a lot to celebrate: for beating their nemesis, the College of St. Rose (ranked ninth in the NCAA Division II national poll), for the New York Collegiate Athletic Conference Championship they took home on March 2, and for picking up the best record in the school's history, finishing the season with 23 wins and only six losses.

However, they don't have the luxury of celebrating just yet. On March 8, they competed in the first round of the NCAA Division II Northeast Regionals against New Hampshire College (20-7) at Sienna College in Loudonville, NY. New Hampshire is the three-time defending NCAA Division II northeast champion.

The Panthers' shooting guard Anthony Gilliam (season averages: 12.3 points, 5.3 rebounds per game) reflected proudly on the season.

"I was excited and I really enjoyed it," he said. "It was our first time as the NYCAC champions, and we beat St. Rose at their own place." Adelphi won that game by one point, 77-76.

Point guard Danny Gimpel (season averages: 15.4 points, 8.1 assists, and 2.0 steals per game) won the championship game when he hit two clutch free throws with four seconds left in the game. Gimpel, who was named Most Valuable Player of the NYCAC Tournament, will never forget those moments at the foul line.

"Unbelievable. I never felt like that," he said. "I've never had so much pressure put on me, but I overcame it and hit the two biggest free throws of my career."

Forward Perry Herbert (season averages: a team-high 21.0 points and a team-high 7.2 rebounds per game) probably took the team's regular season home court loss to St. Rose on Feb. 10 harder than any of his teammates. Yet his reaction to beating them was the most understated.

"It still hasn't hit me yet," Herbert said. "This isn't over now because we have a lot more to do."

A lot more, indeed. If they are to get out of the Regionals, they will have to beat New Hampshire, St. Rose in the second round, and then win the championship game on Sunday. Their goal is to win the Northeast Regional title and go to the Elite Eight in Kentucky.

Herbert spoke for his teammates when

he said, "We can go all the way. You just never know."

Head coach Steve Clifford is cautiously optimistic about both his team's objectives and their chances. "Our ultimate goal, as a team, is to win the regional," he said. "Although there is a definite feeling of accomplishment, I think they all understand that this is a great opportunity.

"We'll be ready to play," he added, "and at this stage of the game, it's not enough to be mentally ready, and it's not enough to play hard. It's the teams that execute and make their plays that will win. We did that

over the weekend [at the NYCAC Tournament], so we can do it again."

It was the victory over St. Rose that gives the coach reason to believe that his team can go far. "Ever since the game here [on Feb. 10], we've realized that we're good enough to beat them," Clifford said. "[The NYCAC championship] was a great win, and we made some big plays at the end of the game. But, as I told these guys afterwards, we didn't do anything out of the ordinary. We're just good enough to beat them. The way we've played the last couple of weeks, we're capable of beating anybody."

Although the stakes are higher now and the pressure has been turned up a few notches, the coach said he isn't doing anything different to prepare his team than he did during the regular season. Then again, why should he mess with success?

In his first year as a collegiate head coach, he has amassed a dazzling 23-6 record, led his team to their first conference championship, and is taking them to the NCAA Division II Northeast Regionals.

Coach Clifford's players have a great deal of confidence in both him and themselves. While Gilliam admits that he is preparing himself mentally and physically for this tournament, he said, "I'm just going to take it game by game — play each game as hard as I can."

Gimpel talked about the importance of mental preparation, saying, "It's a big thing for us, going out on the court knowing that we can win. If everybody's playing up to par, it's going to be tough for most teams to beat us."

However, the coach hasn't forgotten the physical preparation. On March 6, he ran his team through an intense and fast-paced practice — chiding them, praising them, and reminding them of the level of competition that they are about to enter.

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