

Panthers Topple Top Team

By Leslie Feffer

It was the sweetest win of the season for the Adelphi University men's basketball team. The Panthers, currently sixth place in the 12-team NYCAC [New York Collegiate Athletic Conference,] edged out the number one-rated Philadelphia Textile Rams for a 67-66 victory on Monday, Feb. 20.

Philadelphia Textile, ranked number 12 nationwide in the NCAA Division II, boasts two players—Eugene Haith and David Fields—who are considered among the top 10 Division II players in the country. The Rams' famed talent, though, could not overcome a determined Panther team. In front of a near-capacity crowd, the home team took an early lead and held on to it throughout most of the game.

Adelphi Head Coach Jim O'Connor remarked that his players stepped up their efforts because they were playing against a powerhouse team that has beaten them 27 times in the last 32 games. He lauded his players' "absolute team effort." And they certainly earned this praise!

Forward Perry Herbert scored Adelphi's first basket, which drew thunderous applause from the stands. From that point on the Panthers never let up on their intensity. They went into overdrive, hustling after loose balls and applying tremendous pressure on the Philadelphia Textiles' otherwise adept ballhandlers. Adelphi effectively clamped down on the Rams' offense with persistent double- and triple-teaming, as well as sometimes trapping the ball on the inbound play.

Kevin Miller, Herbert's frontcourt teammate, played a great overall game, hitting the backboards to grab a game-high 13 rebounds [three offensive, 10 defensive,] as well as contributing 10 points, two blocked shots and one assist. Raymond Williams' solid performance included 13 points, two rebounds and one blocked shot.

In the battle of the backcourt, sophomore Danny Gimpel unflinchingly dominated Philadelphia Textiles' highly-touted freshman guard, Brendan Fagan, holding him to a mere three points. Fagan, who averages 7.2 ppg [42 percent shooting average,] made only four field goal at-

tempts—all from long-range—as Gimpel denied him access to the basket. Gimpel was equally effective at the other end of the court, adding 10 points, four rebounds, [two offensive, two defensive,] two steals and a game-high six assists. Guard Ted Repa gave the Rams some headaches with his dogged defense.

Team Captain Brian Pritchett's six points—perfect shooting from both the field and the foul line in his 10:22 minutes of playing time—helped give the Panthers a halftime margin of 35-30 over the Rams. In the last minute of the first half, Pritchett scored from the floor and moments later sank two free throws.

Early in the second half, Anthony Gilliam's three-point basket brought down the house, as Adelphi widened its lead to a 42-31 margin. Despite the Panthers' grit and energy, the Rams clawed their way back into the game. In a five-minute stretch late in the second half, the Philadelphia Textiles went on an 11-2 run, narrowing the score to 62-60.

The Rams took a 66-62 lead in the last 1:39 minutes of the game. However, the Adelphi team was just not going to let the game slip away from them. Not when they had come this far. While under tremendous pressure, Miller hit two clutch free throws, bringing the score to 66-64.

The Panthers then shut down Philadelphia Textiles' offense. With two seconds left, Herbert launched a three-point shot. As the anxious fans stood up in the bleachers, Herbert "was dropping back, looking at the ball in the air—and it just fell in. I couldn't believe it. I just ran up and down the court, jumping up and down."

In the remaining second, the Rams were unable to score and the final buzzer sounded. The crowd erupted as Coach O'Conner and his team ran onto the court to celebrate their best win of the season. The coach considers this victory near "the top of my career," but cautions that the team needed to get ready for its next game which was two nights later against New York Tech. After the Panthers closed out the regular season at Mercy College on Saturday, Feb. 24, the NYCAC Playoffs began on Monday, Feb. 27.