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## **Hawks Eliminated from NJCAA Tournament**

**SALINA, Kan.** – Howard College was one of just 16 teams to qualify for the NJCAA Women's Basketball National Tournament.

Unfortunately, it was a brief stay.

The Hawks dropped their second game in as many days Wednesday as Vincennes University (Ind.) pulled away late for a 61-53 win, eliminating Howard from its first appearance at the national tournament since 1998.

Howard finishes the season with a 26-9 overall record that included a Region V Championship.

"We had a great year and there was plenty to be proud of," reflected Howard coach Earl Diddle. "Of course, it's disappointing with how it ended. We faced a lot of great basketball players here and this program gained a lot from this experience of going to the national tournament."

Vincennes led for the better part of the affair, taking its first lead with 14:40 to play in the first half, 6-5. The Lady Trailblazers led by as many as eight points in the first 20 minutes. Howard cut the deficit to five by the break, courtesy of a 3-point play by Miesha Blackshear with 21 seconds on the clock.

The Hawks opened the second half on an 8-2 run, tying the game at 29 at the 17:51 mark. They took their first lead since early in the first half with 14:02 to play, 32-30.

However, the Hawks was never able to extend any of the three times they had the lead to more than two points.

The game was tied at 38 with 10:42 to play, when Vincennes embarked on an 11-2 run, taking a 49-40 advantage with 6:05 to go. The closest Howard could get after that point was within four.

For a second consecutive game, the Hawks struggled from the floor, shooting just 30.6 percent from the floor.

"They do a good job with their 2-3 matchup zone and kept us from finding any open areas," said Diddle. "The fact that they have a 6-5 player in the middle of that zone makes it that much harder to attack because you they have her backing up their perimeter players. There's no secret as to why they're here. We spent too much time dribbling and passing around the arch instead of trying to penetrate."

Meanwhile, Vincennes connected on 48.8 percent of its shots. The Lady Blazers were led by Hope Elam, who has committed to play at NCAA Division I Indiana University next season. Elam posted 20 points to lead all scorers.

Ashley Buis scored 19, including three treys, while Katie Ahaus made 8 of 9 field goals for 17 points.

Howard got 14 from Patricia Malouff with Miesha Blackshear adding 12 and Chassidy Cole scoring 11.

The Hawks lose a large majority of their players to graduation, including starters Malouff, Blackshear, Rachael Driver and DeAndra Thomas. They also lose top reserves Clarissa Krum and Danielle Cota.

The fifth starter for Howard, Cole, might be moving on as well as several NCAA Division I schools, including San Jose State, Iowa State and Texas Tech have shown interest in her.

In other words, Diddle is preparing to hit the recruiting trail hard in the next few weeks.

“We might be starting over completely depending on how much we lose,” said Diddle. “We’ve had some great sophomores and they were a big part of building this program. Recruiting is going to be a lot easier than it was five years ago when we were in the same situation because we’re coming off of an appearance at the national tournament. We’ll get back. Take a day to regroup and then we’ll get on the recruiting trail and start trying to work our way back to Salina.”

### **Vincennes University 61, Howard College 53**

#### **Howard (26-9)**

Rachael Dryver 1-5 2-2 4, DeAndra Thomas 2-7 0-0 4, Miesha Blackshear 4-11 4-5 12, Patricia Malouff 5-17 2-2 14, Chassidy Cole 4-12 0-0 11, NaTalia Smith 0-2 0-0 0, Clarissa Krum 2-6 0-0 6, Danielle Cota 1-2 0-0 2. Totals 19-62 8-9 53.

#### **Vincennes (24-9)**

Hope Elam 7-15 6-8 20, MyQueshia Britton 0-1 3-4 3, Kaitlin Cochren 1-4 0-0 2, Katie Ahaus 8-9 0-0 17, Ashley Buis 5-13 6-6 19, Megan Craft 0-1 0-1 0, Bridget Buchanan 0-0 0-0 0, Ellie Kapoulitsa 0-0 0-0 0. Totals 21-43 15-19 61.

Halftime: VU 27, HC 22. 3-point goals: HC 7-27 (Cole 3-9, Malouff 2-10, Krum 2-6, Blackshear 0-1, Smith 0-1), VU 4-12 (Buis 3-6, Ahaus 1-1, Elam 0-3, Bratton 0-1, Craft 0-1). Total fouls: HC 15, VU 13. Fouled out: None. Rebounds: HC 34 (Blackshear 8), VU 33 (Cochren 8). Assists: HC 10 (Malouff 3, Cole 3), VU 10 (Ahaus 3, Buchanan 3). Steals: HC 11 (Malouff 3, Cole 3), VU 9 (Elam 4). Turnovers: HC 17, VU 21. Technical fouls: HC – Coach Earl Diddle.