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Panthers Record First Winning Season Since 1999

The Clark Atlanta University (CAU) Men's Basketball Team finished the 2007 – 2008 season, advancing to the semifinals of the Southern Intercollegiate Athletic Conference (SIAC) Tournament. Despite an 81 - 57 loss in the final four of the SIAC Tournament to No. 1 ranked Benedict College, the Panthers closed the year eclipsing their 2006 – 2007 season of 2 – 26, with a 16 – 14 overall mark and a 13 – 9 conference standing. The last time the Panthers finished with a winning record was the 1999 season.

In the 2007-08 campaign, the Panthers played some of the best teams among Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU). En route to their winning season, the Panthers defeated the number one ranked team in the SIAC, the Benedict College Tigers, and the number two ranked Magicians of LeMoyne-Owen College. The Panthers shattered a pre-season prediction of finishing last in the SIAC, concluding the tournament ranked third in the league.

The Panthers swept the two-game series in the regular season against Stillman College, Lane College, Albany State University and cross-campus rival Morehouse College.

“We worked extremely hard preparing for and during the regular season. We felt we were strong and talented enough to compete with the conference's best,” Head Coach Darryl Jacob said. “We've made pretty good progress in developing a solid program here at CAU. However, we continue to recognize that there is still a lot of room for improvement. Now that we have tasted victories in the tournament, it should fuel our hunger for the SIAC title.”

Individually, several Panthers had an outstanding season, led by newcomers, junior guard Kevin Johnson, freshman guard Najee Lane, junior forward/center Garry Beverly, and senior forward Ale Burt.

Johnson averaged 14.4 points per game, ranking him eight in the conference. He also finished fourth in the league with a .789 free-throw percentage. Johnson took the title in the 3-pointers per game category, averaging three in every competition. He also scored 20-points or more in five games and garnered the team's leader in points in 14 games. Johnson was named to the All-SIAC Second Team.

Lane averaged 13.2 points per-game and finished the season ranked number two in the SIAC in free-throw percentage with a .847 percentage. He finished in the conference's top ten in steals with a 1.77 average, while leading the Panthers in scoring on seven occasions, including a season high of 27 points against Morehouse College in February. Lane was named to the SIAC All-Tournament squad.

Burt concluded his senior season averaging 9.9 points per game. He was the team's third leading scorer and top rebounder with 6.6 per game. Burt finished among the best in the SIAC in rebounds and minutes played while tallying five double-doubles on the year. He led the team in scoring in 11 competitions.

Beverly led the CAU defensive effort, finishing third in the conference in blocked shots, 1.96 per game. Beverly contributed significantly to the Panthers' rebounding efforts, averaging 6.1 during the season, leading the squad in the category in nine games.

Junior point-guard Paul Nickerson received All-SIAC Academic Honors for the second straight season. The L.S. Epps Scholarship recipient and Business Administration major currently carries a 3.59 grade point average. Nickerson averaged 4.0 points per game and 1.3 assists in his role as a reserve.