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March 2003

Daily Egyptian 2003

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## The Daily Egyptian, March 17, 2003

Daily Egyptian Staff

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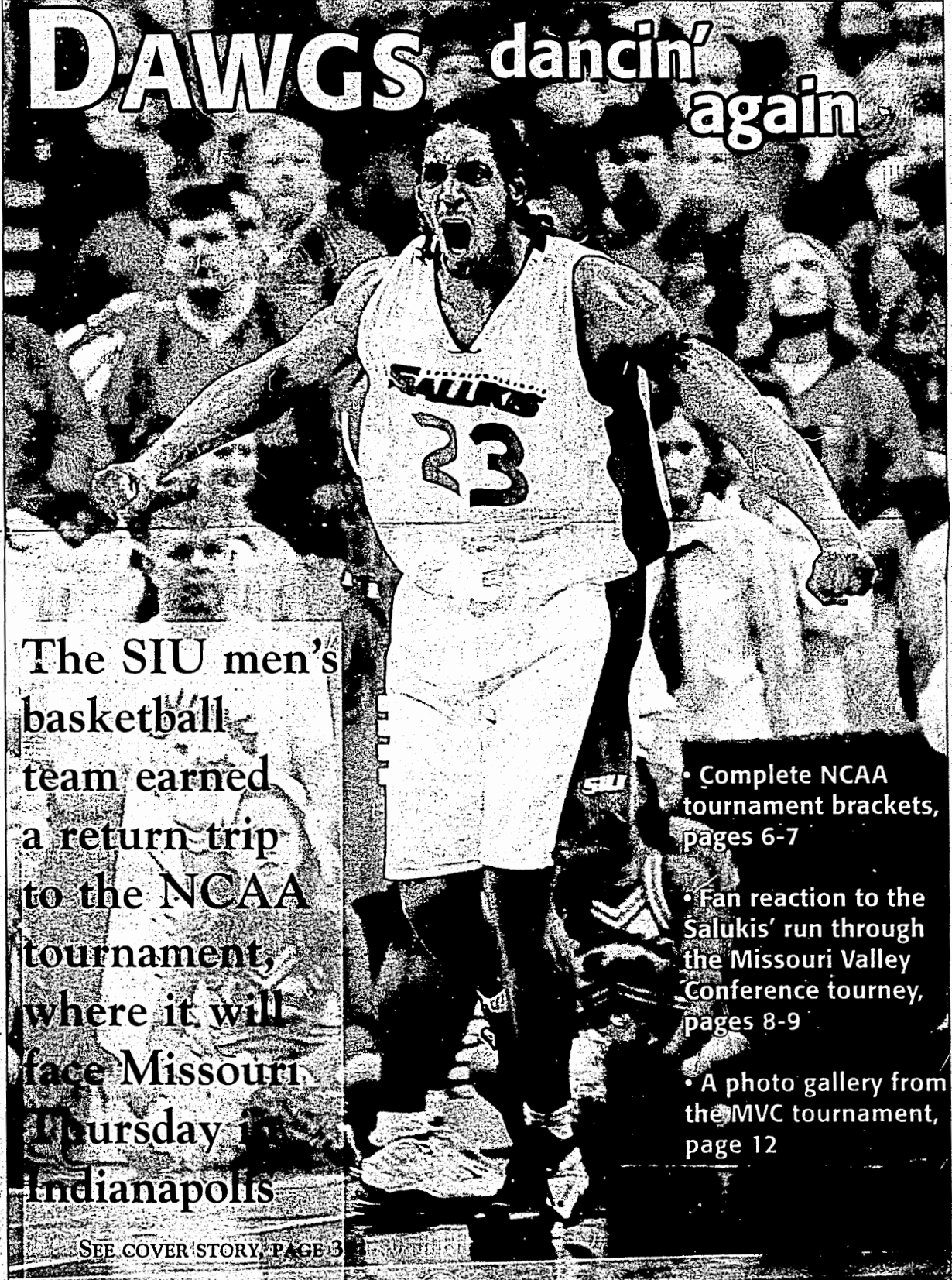
DAILY EGYPTIAN  
**SALUKI SPORTS EXTRA**  
WWW.DAILYEGYPTIAN.COM

VOL. 88, No. 116, 12 PAGES

SOUTHERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY

MONDAY, MARCH 17, 2003

# DAWGS dancin' again



The SIU men's basketball team earned a return trip to the NCAA tournament, where it will face Missouri Thursday in Indianapolis

- Complete NCAA tournament brackets, pages 6-7

- Fan reaction to the Salukis' run through the Missouri Valley Conference tourney, pages 8-9

- A photo gallery from the MVC tournament, page 12

SEE COVER STORY, PAGE 3

**PRO-TECTOR**

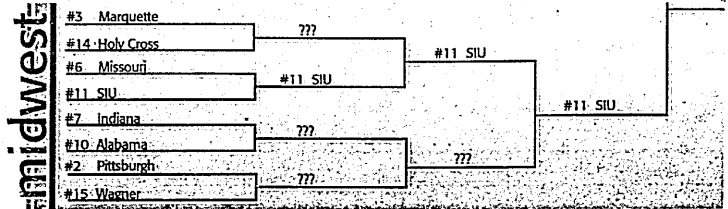
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Here is a look at the teams in the lower half of the Midwest Region. SIU faces Missouri Thursday in Indianapolis and could face Indiana in the Sweet 16 if both teams make it that far again.

**GO DAWGS!**

**Good luck in the NCAA Tournament!**

~DE Staff

**SOUTHERN ILLINOIS salukis**

**24-6, 16-2 MVC**  
Coach: Bruce Weber (103-50)  
RPI Rank: 38 SOS: 143

**TOP PLAYERS:**

Kent Williams (6-2 185 G)	15.3 ppg	46 FG%	48 3FG%
Jermaine Dearman (6-8 220 F)	14.4 ppg	6.5 reb	54 FG%
Darren Brooks (6-3 205 G)	12.9 ppg	47 FG%	2.0 spg
Stetson Hairston (6.3 200 G)	10.8 ppg	39 3FG%	3.1 ast
Sylvester Willis (6-7 225 F)	4.3 ppg	4.1 reb	46 FG%

Team FG%: .473 Team 3FG%: .385  
Team FT%: .706 Rebound Margin: -0.9  
Scoring Average: 74.5 Scoring Defense: 68.1

**MISSOURI tigers**

**21-10, 9-7 Big Twelve**  
Coach: Quinn Snyder (84-38)  
RPI Rank: 16 SOS: 10

**TOP PLAYERS:**

Rickey Paulding (6-5, 212 G/F)	17 ppg	45 FG%	38 3FG%
Arthur Johnson (6-9, 265 F/C)	15.3 ppg	9.2 reb	1.9 BPG
Ricky Clemons (5-11 172 G)	15.2 ppg	3.8 ast	35 3FG%
Travon Bryant (6-9 236 F)	9.2 ppg	25.5 mpg	6.1 reb
Jimmy McKinney (6-3 200 G)	8.8 ppg	3.5 ast	31.1 mpg

Team FG%: .443 Team 3FG%: .360  
Team FT%: .660 Rebound Margin: +3.0  
Scoring Average: 72.6 Scoring Defense: 67.1

**BOTTOM LINE:**

The Salukis should be hungry after being destroyed by Creighton 80-56 in the Missouri Valley Conference championship game. SIU will have play smart to void Mizzo's size advantage. The Dawgs' bench will play a huge role in determining whether or not they are this year's Cinderella.

**BOTTOM LINE:**

The Tigers have a distinct advantage in overall athleticism and are on a hot streak after their strong second-place performance in the Big Twelve Conference tournament. Watch out for Arthur Johnson.

**MARQUETTE golden eagles**

**23-5, 14-2 Conference USA**  
Coach: Tom Crean  
RPI Rank: 10 SOS: 49

**TOP PLAYERS:**

Dwayne Wade (6-5 210 G)	21.9 ppg	.468 FG%
Robert Jackson (6-10 260 F)	15.7 ppg	.554 FG%
Travis Diener (6-1 165 G)	11.2 ppg	.390 FG%
Scott Merritt (6-10 245 F)	9.8 ppg	.468
Todd Townsend (6-7 215 F)	6.6 ppg	.476 FG%

**HOLY CROSS crusaders**

**25-4, 14-2 Patriot League**  
Coach: Ralph Willard  
RPI Rank: 64 SOS: 299

**TOP PLAYERS:**

Patrick Whearty (6-9 245 C)	12.1 ppg	.562 FG%
Brian Wilson (6-2 185 G)	11.9 ppg	.487 FG%
Tim Szatko (6-8 220 F)	11.4 ppg	.381 FG%
Jave Meade (6-1 180 G)	11.1 ppg	.487
Nate Lufkin (6-11 220 C)	5.3 ppg	.630 FG%

**INDIANA hoosiers**

**20-12, 8-8 Big Ten**  
Coach: Mike Davis  
RPI Rank: 42 SOS: 39

**TOP PLAYERS:**

Bracey Wright	17.1 ppg	Kyle Hornsby	9.8 ppg
Jeff Newton	14.9 ppg	Marshall Strickland	6.6 ppg
Tom Coverdale	11.3 ppg		

**ALABAMA crimson tide**

**17-11, 7-9 Southeastern**  
Coach: Mark Gottfried  
RPI Rank: 35 SOS: 13

**TOP PLAYERS:**

Maurice Williams	15.7 ppg	Kenny Walker	9.4 ppg
Erwin Dudley	15 ppg	Antoine Petway	6.1 ppg
Kennedy Winston	11.6 ppg		

**PITTSBURGH panthers**

**26-4, 13-3 Big East**  
Coach: Ben Howland  
RPI Rank: 8 SOS: 77

**TOP PLAYERS:**

Julius Page	12.2 ppg	Ontario Lett	10.4 ppg
Chevon Troutman	11.4 ppg	Donatas Zavackas	10.2 ppg
Brandin Knight	10.6 ppg		

**WAGNER seahawks**

**21-9, 14-4 Northeast**  
Coach: Dereck Whittenburg  
RPI Rank: 101 SOS: 254

**TOP PLAYERS:**

Jemaine Hall	21.5 ppg	Courtney Patchard	9.5 ppg
Dedrick Dye	12.5 ppg	Teone Carroll	9.4 ppg
Nigel Wyatt	11.8 ppg		

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DEREK ANDERSON - DAILY EGYPTIAN

Sylvester Willis, Stetson Hairston and Jermaine Dearman celebrate after learning they had earned an at-large bid to the NCAA Tournament. Team members and Saluki supporters gathered at Bleyer's Lodge just outside Carbondale Sunday to watch the NCAA selection show. The Salukis will play Missouri in Indianapolis Thursday.

# The wait is over

SIU survives bubble scare, draws Missouri in first round of Big Dance

Michael Brenner  
Daily Egyptian

About 100 people jumped in the air and belted out screams of elation, Brad Korn strolled for the first time in 45 minutes and the tandem of Jermaine Dearman, Sylvester Willis and Stetson Hairston formed a mini mosh pit in front of the big-screen TV.

It was finally official — SIU was in.

The effects of a week of angst and uncertainty were instantly wiped away Sunday evening when the team heard the words "Southern Illinois" come from Greg Gumble's lips from Bleyer's Lodge outside Carbondale, where the team had gathered to watch the NCAA Tournament Selection Show.

The Salukis will enter the Midwest bracket of the Big Dance Thursday in Indianapolis as a No. 11 seed against No. 6 Missouri.

"We've been waiting all week," said Dearman, who will get to play in his hometown of Indianapolis. "I pushed it to the back of my head because I didn't want to think about it all week until now because I didn't want to go through that pressure.

"Once I saw our name come up, it was just a great feeling."

SIU had to wait more than half an hour to finally see its name, which was a stark contrast from last year when it saw its name in the first five minutes of the show.

At 5:30 p.m., after Missouri was announced as the No. 6 seed, Willis prophetically screamed out "this is us" before the lodge erupted.

For Korn, who spent the entirety of the show biting his lip while arching forward in a zombie-like state, the announcement could not have come soon enough.

"Last year, it popped up quick so we didn't have to wait as long," Korn said. "This year we went through two whole brackets and the commercials, which made you wait even longer."

SIU head coach Bruce Weber, in stark contrast to Willis, was planning what he would say to his team if it did not make it into the tournament as his team's name was about to be read.

Moments before the revelation of SIU as a tournament team, he whispered to his wife that the Salukis were in trouble.

"I had knots in my stomach," Weber said.

But when the noise died down and he had given a five-minute talk to his team before it talked to the media, Weber looked as if someone had taken a bag of cement off his soldiers at his press conference a few minutes after learning his team was in.

"It's great for our players," Weber said. "Our seniors are very deserving. It's great for our University and our school to have this opportunity, and hopefully, we can make the best of it."

Weber went on to point out that

this season's at-large bid was the second straight for SIU, and Weber said it is an outstanding achievement for a mid-major team like his Salukis. Weber said he was ecstatic for his players.

"For us to get a back-to-back at-large bids as a mid-major is a tremendous accomplishment," Weber said. "I know our players are very appreciative and I hope the fans are and understand that to get that is not easy."

Junior guard Bryan Turner, who missed all six of his shot attempts during Monday's debacle against Creighton, is psyched to receive a shot at redemption and said March 10 is now ancient history.

Turner, a St. Louis native, is thrilled at the thought of playing against Missouri, which is the team he grew up rooting for. He also knows the Tigers fairly well because he, along with teammates Darren Brooks and Stetson Hairston, played in the Athletic Amateur Union in St. Louis during the off-season. The trio honed their skills against Missouri starters Jimmy McKinney and Travon Bryant.

But Turner said he is just thrilled to be in. He does not care who the opponent is.

"We got a lot of weight off our chest right now," Turner said. "I'm so excited. I can't wait."

Reporter Michael Brenner  
can be reached at  
mbrenner@dailyegyptian.com

## Students

Lottery numbers available 4 pm, Tuesday,  
Lingle Hall. Lottery begins at 5 pm.

Single game price: \$45

All-session tickets: \$105 or \$135

## Tickets on sale Tuesday

Molly Parker  
Daily Egyptian

Student tickets to Thursday's NCAA tournament game against Missouri will be sold by a lottery system Tuesday beginning at 4 p.m. at the SIU Ticket Office in Lingle Hall.

Only one raffle ticket per student ID will be given and the lottery will begin at 5 p.m., SIU Athletic Director Paul Kowalczyk said.

"We want to try and take care of people and do all we can and try and help the students," Kowalczyk said.

The price for single-game tickets will be \$45. If a ticket is purchased and SIU advances to the Saturday game, the ticket holder is automatically responsible for purchasing the second ticket.

The University has 350 tickets to the game and will likely purchase another 200 tickets, bringing the

total number to about 500 that will go to donors, season-ticket holders and the general public if there is enough demand.

Non-student tickets will be distributed based on a priority system in which donors who have given the most money to the Saluki Athletic Scholarship Fund will get the first crack at tickets.

The travel party, which includes tickets for the team and coaches' families, will also dip into the Salukis' available tickets.

General public ticket requests can be made starting Monday at 8 a.m. by calling or visiting the Ticket Office.

Request for all-session tickets, which are \$105 or \$135, can also be made at the SIU Ticket Office or purchased through TicketMaster.

The time for the Thursday game will be announced today.

Reporter Molly Parker can be  
reached at editor@siu.edu





The SIU men's basketball team and family members wait nervously Sunday afternoon seconds before the Salukis were announced as participants in the 2003 NCAA tournament. The team's reaction was televised nationally on CBS.

DEREK ANDERSON  
DAILY EGYPTIAN

## Salukis overcome losses by higher seeds in other conferences

Jens Deju  
Daily Egyptian

The SIU men's basketball team sat around the television set Sunday and rooted for a team they traditionally have not liked — Illinois.

Illinois was playing Ohio State in the championship game of the Big Ten tournament and the Salukis knew if the Buckeyes, who entered the tournament with just 15 wins, defeated the Fighting Illini, SIU's chances of receiving an at-large bid into the Big Dance would suffer a major blow.

With the Illinois victory, the Salukis were able to breathe easier knowing Ohio State would not knock SIU out of the NCAA tournament.

They would later learn they had received their second straight at-large berth into the Big Dance as a No. 11 seed against No. 6 seeded Missouri in Indianapolis Thursday.

Ohio State was one of several teams across the country pulling off upsets in the conference tournaments that spelled danger for the Salukis.

The reason for this is that every time a highly regarded team lost in the conference tourney, it was another of the 34 at-large bids not going to SIU.

This week proved to be especially hard for the Salukis as 14 of the top 25 teams in the country lost in their respective tournaments

while bottom-feeders such as UCLA, USC, Temple and even Missouri knocked off power teams.

In the Big 12 Tournament, Missouri knocked off No. 20 Oklahoma State, No. 4 Kansas and lost by just two points to No. 6 Oklahoma in the championship game.

SIU senior guard Kent Williams said after the loss to Creighton in the championship game of the Missouri Valley Conference tournament that the Salukis needed to root for the favorites.

"It was definitely nerve wracking seeing all these other teams knocking off the No. 1 seeds," Williams said. "It's tough sitting here these last few days watching all these upsets happen and wondering how far is it knocking us down."

While Williams was nervous about all the upsets taking place, junior center Sylvester Willis said he had no worries.

However, he said once the selection show kicked off, the nerves kicked in.

"The nerves didn't really hit me until they started picking the teams because there was nothing we could do but just sit back and wait," Willis said. "I really started getting nervous at seeing a bunch of bubble teams get in."

"It was just, man are we going to get in or not — but it turned out for the best."

Reporter Jens Deju can be reached at [jdeju@dailyegyptian.com](mailto:jdeju@dailyegyptian.com)

## Salukis take on torrid Tigers

SIU men's basketball team to face red-hot Missouri in Indianapolis

Zack Creglow  
Daily Egyptian

The Missouri men's basketball team's 21-10 record is not one that will cause an opposing squad to cover in fear and hop in bed with its parents at first — but its athleticism and multitude of scoring options quickly can.

That is why the SIU men's basketball team must be weary of having a defensive lapse against the sixth-seeded Tigers, who have three players average over 15 points per game, on Thursday night in Indianapolis.

Leading the Missouri attack is junior Ricky Paulding who torches opposing defenses for 17 points a contest. Paulding, who is revered as a dynamic athlete and slasher, also has the ability to nail the three-point shot as his 38 percent (64 of 168) suggests. He also stands at a muscular 6-foot-5 and 212 pounds, making him a difficult body with which to match up.

He is joined by former junior-college standout Ricky Clemons. Clemons, a Junior College All-American at the College of South Idaho last season, uses his water-bug quickness and scorer's mentality to score 15.2

a contest to go along with 3.8 assists.

But making this team just a perimeter team would be too easy on the Salukis, and the Tigers have an imposing inside force in their 6-foot-9 265-pound big man Arthur Johnson. Loaded with an arsenal of polished moves and superior touch, Johnson tossed in 15.3 and pulled down an amazing 9.2 rebounds a contest.

Johnson has a solid inside mate in former McDonald's All-American Travon Bryant. Bryant, who shed much unneeded weight from last season to alter his size to 6-foot-9 and 236 pounds, provides 9.2 points and 6.1 rebounds 25.5 minutes of play.

An X-factor for Missouri is freshman combo guard Jimmy McKinney. McKinney averages 8.8 points, but he has the ability to explode for superb numbers. He is far ahead of his years or the court as his 101-60 turnover-to-assist ratio proves and is also used to winning. He led his (St. Louis) Vashon squad to a 107 '0 record over his high school career and ended last season at No. 3 in the USA Today national prep poll.

But the Tigers' bench is nothing more than average. The highest scoring average coming off the pine for Missouri is from junior Josh Kroenke with a 3.3 point per game average. The next highest is the 2.3 points per game mark from Kevin Young.

Reporter Zack Creglow can be reached at [zreglow@dailyegyptian.com](mailto:zreglow@dailyegyptian.com)

# A moment of beauty amid the carnage

ST. LOUIS — The game was mercifully ending. Creighton was preparing to celebrate and SIU was praying the NCAA Selection committee would not disown it.

The cheerleaders sat motionless on the sideline with their eyes wide open, attempting to figure out why SIU was unable to stop the Bluejay atom bomb that had been hurled at it Monday night. One of them threw a pom-pom to the ground in disgust.

They all needed booze — badly. Saluki fans, to their credit, stuck around to the bitter end, though they were not acting like the loud and obnoxious psychopaths I had grown to love. They seemed rather subdued and I knew a few of them would cry for the duration of their drive back to Carbondale.

I thought I might do the same thing. This was one of the most disgusting, heart-breaking and lopsided losses I had ever been privy to. I had never witnessed such a horrid display of athletic impotence — and I'm a Cubs fan.

The depression never set in. A few hours after the game, I was content as a Bluejays fan coming from church.

It did not make sense.

The Salukis lost to Creighton, the most talented collection of demons and imps since Bill Laimbeer's Pistons.

And they did not just lose, lose badly or lose in an embarrassing and demeaning fashion — Monday could have been a preview for the impending Gulf War Part II in Iraq.

But I did not care. I was happy. Part of it was that SIU still had a shot at the tournament, knowing the season would not end this way and the certainty that Twinkies were still plentiful back in the pressroom.

But it was so much more than that, and I didn't figure it out until six hours after the game had ended.

Think back, unless you have already undergone hypnosis to remove Monday night from your memory, to the last few minutes of the game.

The score was 76-54 in favor of the infidels and Jermaine Dearman had just knocked a ball out of bounds, giving SIU head coach Bruce Weber a chance to make a few substitutions.

Kent Williams, along with Dearman, came out of the game at a time they are not accustomed to, and they received a greeting they were

### COMMENTARY



Michael Brenner

[mbrenner@dailyegyptian.com](mailto:mbrenner@dailyegyptian.com)

not accustomed to as well.

Both were intercepted by their coach as they walked to what would be their final seats at their final Missouri Valley Conference tournaments.

Williams reached Weber first and was received a hug from his coach, as well as condolences.

"I'm sorry," Weber told Williams. "I'm sure you're disappointed but hopefully you'll play again."

Right behind the senior point guard was Dearman, who clearly did not look like he wanted to walk, talk or live. He had a wide-eyed look on his face that seemed to imply a desire to shut himself off from the world and move to a shack in Montana.

Weber put his arms around his senior forward as Dearman

attempted to walk right through him and tried to cheer him up.

The first attempt to get the message across did not work, so Weber gave Dearman a second and more authoritative embrace, which was touching but somewhat hilarious. Dearman is nearly a foot taller than his coach.

Weber told him to smile, and Dearman replied by asking what he had to smile about.

"We've done some pretty good things," Weber told Dearman, attempting to make him think of previous successes instead of the horror that had just taken place.

Those watching on TV got a glimpse of it, but it did the moment no justice. I watched the tape a few days later and through the television, would have thought nothing of it either.

But from 50 feet away from the Saluki bench, it was a tear-jerking sight to anyone with a pulse. That was why I was not depressed. What I had witnessed reduced the game, and that was all it was at that point — a game, to a trivial match-up between regular people.

That one moment of beauty made me forget the score, how much

I hated Creighton and how painful it was going to be to interview a giddy Kyle Korver after the slaughter.

Weber had taken hold of his two seniors, especially Dearman, the way a father would after his child had endured a rough day at school. It was a microcosm for the relationship between a good coach and his players, and it reminded me of the times my father had done the same for me.

With that fresh in my mind, I shrugged off the sight of Kyle Korver wearing the championship net around his neck at the post-game press conference.

I drove away from the Savvis Center with a feeling of contentment. The five-hour drive to my parents' West Suburban home was peaceful, serene and devoid of negative thoughts, and as I drove through the black skies of central Illinois, I hoped Williams and Dearman had enjoyed a similar two-hour journey back to Carbondale.

Their coach had given them every reason to be happy.

Michael is a junior in journalism. His views do not necessarily reflect those of the DAILY EGYPTIAN.

### Down but not out



DEREK ANDERSON - DAILY EGYPTIAN

After losing the Missouri Valley Conference tournament championship game by 24 points to Creighton, SIU junior guard Bryan Turner listens to his headphones and waits in the Saluki locker room for other team members to get dressed and make the long trip back to Carbondale. The Dawgs fretted all week about earning a bid to the NCAA tournament, but their worries were relieved Sunday evening when it was announced that SIU would play Missouri in the first round of the tourney Thursday in Indianapolis.

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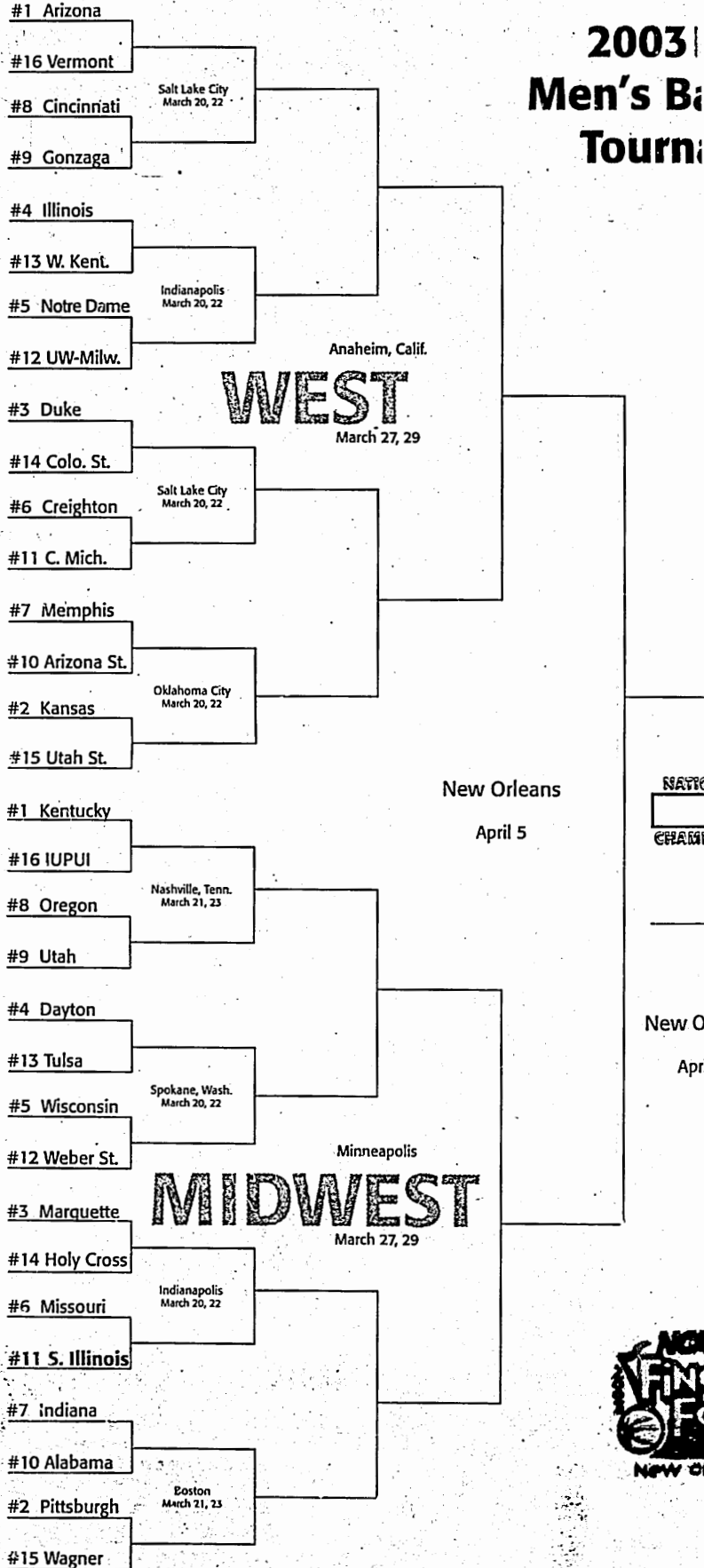
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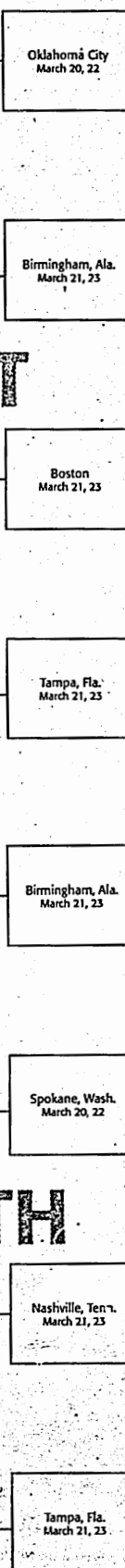
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- #9 NC State
- #4 Louisville
- #13 Austin Peay
- #5 Miss. St.
- #12 Butler
- #3 Syracuse
- #14 Manhattan
- #6 Okla. St.
- #11 Penn
- #7 St. Joseph's
- #10 Auburn
- #2 Wake Forest
- #15 E. Tenn. St.
- #1 Texas
- #16 NC-Ashtx/So
- #8 Louisiana St.
- #9 Purdue
- #4 Stanford
- #13 San Diego
- #5 Connecticut
- #12 BYU
- #3 Xavier
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DEREK ANDERSON - DAILY EGYPTIAN

Thousands of Saluki fans converged on the Sawvis Center in St. Louis dressed up and painted to cheer on SIU for the duration of the Missouri Valley Conference tournament. Many fans brought foam bones, mini Salukis and dressed in anything maroon to show their team spirit.

# FANS, FRENZY & FAITH

SIUC fans travel to St. Louis to support the Salukis through the trials and tribulations of the MVC tournament

Jessica Yorama  
Daily Egyptian

Long sympathetic hugs.  
Comforting pats on the back.  
Sweaty faces covered by towels.  
Blurry eyes fighting tears and the haunting vision of the scoreboard.  
The almost audible sound of the clock clicking away on the season.  
The Salukis were responsible for causing South Missouri State and Illinois State to experience the agony of defeat.  
And Monday night, they felt it themselves.  
But before the pounding that left the Dawgs' NCAA future uncertain, fans leaving home before the game ended and an all-but-silenced and stunned Dawg Pound, the Salukis had a few days to revel in the sweet taste of victory.  
Despite the not-so-sweet smell of stale popcorn, sticky floor and crowded atmosphere of the Savvis Center, large numbers of fans maneuvered their way into the stadium Saturday to watch the Salukis play their first tournament game against Illinois State University.  
"You get a completely different perspective watching the game on television than you do live," said Helen Martinko, a senior in rehabilitation services from Carbondale. "Watching in person gives you more of an opportunity to see the personality of the players."  
Martinko was not alone in her desire to

support the Dawgs in person. The SIU and ISU matchup provided the highest attendance for a Missouri Valley Conference Tournament game that day. Maroon was the predominate color in the fairly packed audience with chants of ISU faint.  
"It looks good out here," said Doug Owens, a junior in elementary education from LeRoy. "The stadium's full of maroon and white and there's only a few specs of the other teams' school colors. It's a good image for the school."  
The chorus of three ISU fans sitting in the Dawg Pound held steady throughout what was, at first, a close battle between the two teams. But as SIU progressively pulled ahead, even the three ISU fans who spent the majority of the game chanting "ISU!" abandoned their team spirit somewhere on the sticky floor and joined in chants of "SIU! SIU!"  
SIU seemed to find the fair-weather fans amusing as they, in spite of their bright red shirts, stood to join in the sea of students clad in maroon in cheering on the Dawgs. Although they took part in the victory over ISU, a great deal of shirts reading "I H8 Creighton," showed what Saluki fans had in mind.

The buzzer prepared to sound, leaving the score at 72-65 and members of the ISU team standing in a hopeless huddle, their coach before them, their season, clearly behind.



LESTER E. MURRAY - DAILY EGYPTIAN

Elvis showed up to cheer the Dawgs in the final game of the MVC Championship game March 10 in St. Louis. Even with the king in attendance it just was not enough to overtake Creighton.

See FANS, page 9

## FANS

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 8

The game against South Missouri State provided a sense of déjà vu. A different team, sporting the same school colors as SIU, demonstrated essentially the same scenario for fans.

The initial fear, as the Bears, a squad the Dawgs beat with ease later in the season, appeared a worthy opponent of the Salukis. Midway into the fourth quarter, fans experienced a united sense of relief as the Dawgs released themselves from the grip the Bears held them in for most of the game.

The trumpets and trombones of the pep band roared once again, fans of the opposing team finally took their seats realizing once and for all there was nothing to cheer about.

Wearing identical colors, but no longer the same degree of spirit, they sat, arms folded, as Saluki fans swayed and danced to the SIU school song.

Messages of "I bleed Saluki maroon," "Go Salukis," and most popularly, "I H8 Cr8ton," traveled across the bleachers where fans swarmed together to discuss the past, present and mostly, the future of their team.

Everyone seemed to agree, in spite of several close points in both games, that ISU and SMS presented no contest for the Dawgs.

The common consensus seemed to be that the Creighton Bluejays would not be so easily shot down.

But fans had a variety of theories as to how to ensure victory.

"You can't think about it," said Tim Egan, a senior in plant and soil science from Libertyville. "If you hesitate you lose, so you can't think about it the possibility of losing."

Leanne Milner felt attendance was the key to victory.

"I think it will be pretty tight between us and Creighton," said Milner, a senior in radio and television from Springfield. "We'll probably win by about six. It depends on how many people show up and how pissed off we get."

Aaron Loese did not have any special strategies to guarantee victory, but he did have confidence.

"We killed Creighton the other night," said Loese a sophomore in mechanical engineering from Alton. "We're going to win. And I'm not guessing, I know that."

It is impossible to list all of the various rituals and theories fans performed before the game. Some wore lucky socks, some only hoped, but a great deal seemed to agree with Milner's idea that attendance would play a role in the potential victory.

Creighton fans appeared to feel the same way.

An hour and a half before the game, the entrance to the Savvis Center was compacted with the various blues and maroons of fans, both believing their team would be the victor.

Nia Jefferson and her friends Nikki Hickman and Bianca Tines were not clad in the Saluki jerseys they wore during previous games, but they had taken the time to design a sign with the words, "Fox 23, Dearman, Saluki Showtime."

"I spilled maroon paint in my friends new 2003 car," said Jefferson, a senior in radio and television from Springfield. "I also think we may have broke some-



LESTER E. MURRAY - DAILY EGYPTIAN

Maggie Uhrig of Carterville was all painted up in anticipation of the MVC tournament. Uhrig showed her SIU spirit and wore #23 on her cheek in support of Jermaine Dearman.

thing on the way. But we'll worry about those problems later.

"We've been burning up the highway to come see this game because we love this team and these are great guys to watch. There have been times when things were a little sluggish, but we never doubted them for a second.

"And as soon as we win here, we're going to gas up the car and go with them to where ever the next game is and join the pandemonium there."

There was barely enough room for Jefferson and other fans to breathe in the crowded ticket lines, but there seemed to be plenty of space for chants.

Taunts of "Korver sucks!" were responded to with boos from disapproving Creighton fans.

In return, Bluejay fans accompanied chants of "SIU" with quick, strong retorts of the word "sucks."

SIU fans continued to taunt Creighton minutes before the game by mockingly perusing the newspaper during the Bluejay's pre-game introductions, tossing the papers into the air as the final game of the MVC tournament began.

In response, the Bluejays tossed up 14 points before the Salukis were even able to respond.

More than 15 failed shots were discouraging to students, but the majority stuck it out on their feet.

It was not until shortly before halftime, when the Dawgs fell behind by 26, that rows of fans started to fall like dominoes.

However, a majority of unsettled, seated fans in no way meant fans were deterred.

In spite of the unbelievable lead the Bluejays coasted over the Dawgs' heads, students such as Jon Zoanetti still predicted a five-point lead for the Salukis.

Students fell to their seats, but the spirits of some fans did not, as students continued to support their

team as the limping Dawgs came only as 24 points behind the game.

Bittersweet chants of "Carney," began, and it was certain the closing efforts of the Dawgs would not be enough.

There were some who abandoned their team as it became clear that they would suffer the same fate they had placed upon ISU and SMS. But most stuck it out to the end, watching longingly as the final buzzer sounded and a mass of blue soared to the court to congratulate their team.

"A lot of us expected to win after March 1," said Brandon Moore, a freshman in radio and television from Chicago. "I'm appalled. I thought it was going to be us on the floor."

The long period the Dawgs spent fighting off defeat did not make preparation any easier for fans such as Moore, who said he would have preferred a closer game, even if it did end in a loss.

"I'd just rather it be a closer game so we could have gotten some respect," said Moore. "We have nothing to say now, no matter how many times we've won in the past this is what people are going to remember."

In spite of disappointment over the Dawgs' futile efforts, fans left hoping that those responsible for the NCAA selections would take into account a stellar play throughout the season and ignore their final performance in the MVC tournament.

In the end, good play during the regular season paid off for the Salukis, as the team was chosen to face the University of Missouri in the NCAA tournament.

Until the game takes place Thursday in Indianapolis all the Salukis can do was wait anxiously with fans just as eager to face Missouri.

"SIU was the No. 1 seed in the MVC for a reason," said Egan. "Because we have the No. 1 fans."

Reporter Jessica Yorama can be reached at jyorama@dailyegyptian.com

## BRENNER

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 11

David Carney was holding a slice, and he may have been the only Saluki who rode the bus back to Carbondale on a full stomach.

Carney's eyes were sunken and his face was bright red.

He was not crying, but there is just something unholly about a man eating a slice of pizza while looking as if his pet had just died.

As the players began to talk to the media, who at that point was myself and the guy from MTV, they seemed to cheer up a little bit.

Hairston cracked a smile toward the end of our interview and Willis laughed slightly, but the overall mood was still doleful.

It was an odd mix between despondent and confused, and I think it helped the beleaguered players to talk to someone who was trying to figure out the same thing they were - how a team known for its shooting could throw up enough bricks to build another Savvis Center.

"It happens," Hairston said, shaking his head and most likely trying to figure out what happened to his team's accuracy as he simultaneously answered my question. "It happens

like this sometimes. It's basketball. It's just how things go sometimes."

Every player I talked to said he had played horribly, but no one could understand why.

Hairston was able to explain SIU's defensive breakdowns at length, but like the others, had no clue why his team had missed 17 of its first 18 shots.

And neither did I, a thought that stayed with me even as I left the Savvis Center and walked through the unseasonably cold streets of downtown St. Louis.

"Will they shoot like this in their next game," I thought. "Or, even worse, will their next game be in the NIT?"

I received what would turn out to be the answer to the latter question Tuesday when I logged onto ESPN.com to assess the damage of the previous night.

Andy Katz took the first chance he could to defend the Salukis.

"Use ink to write Gonzaga and Southern Illinois into your bracket if you've got common sense," Katz wrote.

I sure hope the Saluki players saw the same thing. News like that goes a long way in helping them regain their appetite for basketball, as well as pizza.

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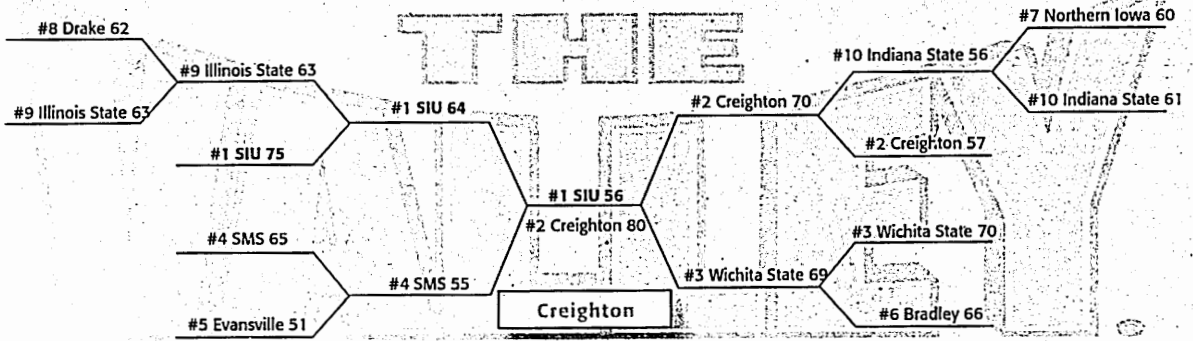
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# Deja vu for SIU in St. Louis

## Creighton topples Salukis in MVC title game once again

Jens Deju  
Daily Egyptian

ST. LOUIS — For the second straight year the SIU men's basketball team had to look at that sign.

The sign read "Missouri Valley Champs" and was held high in the air over screaming fans by a player wearing a MVC Championship hat and t-shirt.

The problem for the Salukis was that the sign was being held by a Creighton Bluejay player — again. SIU head coach Bruce Weber said he wanted his players to remember the Bluejays euphoria when they won the game last season and use it as motivation.

The Salukis remembered the feeling, but could not do anything to change it.

It was deja vu all over again for SIU.

Last year, the Salukis were the No. 1 seed in the tournament while Creighton was No. 2. The two teams were seeded exactly the same this year.

Last year SIU had to go through Southwest Missouri State in the semifinals to get to the champion-

ship game. Once again, SMS stood in their way.

Last year SIU faced Creighton for the championship crown and automatic bid into the NCAA Tournament and lost. This year the Salukis faced Creighton for the championship and lost for the second straight year.

One thing which is not the same is that last year was a close game while this version was a blowout.

The Bluejays started the game on a 10-0 run and went into the locker room at halftime with a 42-16 lead.

SIU head coach Bruce Weber said Creighton's first half spurt reminded him of last year's game when the Bluejays overcame a three-point halftime deficit to beat SIU 84-76.

"They played a lot like they did last year in the tournament in the second half," Weber said.

This time around it was the

Salukis who were down at the half, but instead of just having to overcome a three-point lead they were being shellacked and trailed by 26.

Weber said it was a shame the Salukis could not play better since the championship game is a chance for the conference to be showcased across the country on ESPN.

*"I wanted to play Creighton and I think our kids wanted to play Creighton. We felt to get the two top teams in the championship game is what it's all about."*

— Bruce Weber  
head coach, SIU basketball

"I wanted to play Creighton and I think our kids wanted to play Creighton," Weber said. "We felt to get the two top teams in the championship game is what it's all about."

One thing the Salukis hope they can repeat from last year is that they received an at-large bid and ran over Texas Tech and Georgia in the NCAA Tournament en route to the Sweet 16.

The players had a week off before the announcement of the NCAA Tournament field on Selection Sunday and SIU senior

### MVC All-Tournament Team

Player	Team
Jermaine Dearman	Southern Illinois
Kyle Korver - MVP	Creighton
Larry House	Creighton
Terrance McGee	SW Missouri State
Randy Burns	Wichita State

guard Kent Williams said after the championship game that it was not going to be an easy one.

"It's going to be a tough week again, but we hope that we've done enough," Williams said.

The committee felt SIU had done enough and gave the Salukis one of the rare at-large spots in the Big Dance.

The Salukis get their chance to show the Creighton game was a fluke when they face their first round opponent the Missouri Tigers.

The remaining question is how far can SIU go in the tournament this time around.

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# Creighton hands SIU worst defeat since 2000

Michael Brenner  
Daily Egyptian

Monday's 24-point loss to Creighton was SIU's worst defeat since losing 82-57 to BYU in the 2000 National Invitational Tournament and its worst in the Missouri Valley Conference Tournament since losing to Wichita State by 30 points in 1984.

The Salukis set season lows in field-goal percentage (34 percent), points scored (56), three-point percentage (12 percent) and three-pointers made (2).

SIU's 15 missed three-point shots was a season high.

### On the bright side...

Jermaine Dearman was named to the MVC All-tournament team, joining MVP Kyle Korver, Larry House, Terrance McGee and Randy Burns.

Dearman scored 53 points in three games, pulled down 27 rebounds and for

three straight games, did not get poked in the eye.

### Weber named MVC Coach of the Year

Shortly before the MVC tournament commenced, SIU head coach Bruce Weber was named the 2003 Coach of the Year for the first time in his career.

Weber received 26 of 39 first-place votes, far ahead of Southwest Missouri State's Barry Hinson (7 votes) and Creighton's Dana Altman (4 votes). Wichita State's Mark Turgeon, Evansville's Steve Merfeld and Bradley's Jim Les also received votes.

### Richardson canned

Illinois State head coach Tom Richardson was fired Tuesday following one of the most disappointing seasons in Redbird history.

Picked to finish fourth in the coach's preseason poll, Illinois State finished the season in ninth place with an 8-21 record, including a 1-15 start.

Richardson had just completed his fourth season as head coach in Normal and was only one season removed from finishing second in MVC Coach of the Year balloting.

### Valley sets attendance record

The Missouri Valley Conference broke its old tournament attendance record by more than 4,900 last weekend.

14,911 people showed up for Monday night's championship game, shattering the previous finals record of 10,877 set in 1993 when SIU defeated Illinois State.

The all-time record for single-session attendance was set the previous day, when 15,703 showed up to watch the semifinals.

### Gillingham OK, still set for re-evaluation by neurologist

Bradley guard James Gillingham, who suffered a level-three concussion at the beginning of the Braves' March 8 loss to Wichita State, is still resting in Peoria.

He was released from St. Mary's Hospital in St. Louis on the same day of the injury after undergoing X-rays and a CT scan.

Gillingham was knocked unconscious after absorbing an accidental elbow and knee shot from Wichita State's Jamar Howard. Howard was driving to the basket and while defending, Gillingham slipped, as did Howard, causing the collision.

Gillingham was carted out on a stretcher

and to an ambulance a few feet away in the Savvis Center tunnel. He rode to the hospital with his family, who had flown in from Canada for the tournament.

Bradley trainer called Gillingham fortunate and said Keith Morrow said it could have been much worse.

"It was the most significant hit you can take to the head, because the knee movement delivered so much force," Morrow told the Peoria Journal-Star shortly after the incident. "James was probably knocked out before he hit the floor."

### Korver named second team

Creighton forward Kyle Korver was named a second-team All-American Wednesday, becoming the first Bluejay to earn the honor and the first MVC player to make the team since Hersey Hawkins in 1988.

### Williams watch waning

Kent Williams is still 92 points behind Charlie Vaughn for the SIU all-time scoring record, and it appears he will not make it unless the Salukis make it to the Final Four.

SIU has never made it beyond the Sweet 16, so Vaughn's record will most likely stand for a long time.

# Creighton strikes back

## Weekend of bad shooting culminates in massacre, second straight MVC tourney loss to Bluejays

Michael Brenner  
Daily Egyptian

ST. LOUIS — The players sulked, the cheerleaders sighed and the fans stood in silence.

For the second year in a row, SIU had ended its conference season with a loss to the hated Creighton Bluejays.

The Salukis finished the Missouri Valley Conference tournament with a whimper Monday night, losing 80-56 to Creighton in the championship game. The loss cost SIU an automatic bid to the NCAA tournament and a week of uncertainty before finally learning it would play Missouri in the opening round of the Big Dance Thursday.

The cause of Monday's dismantling was the same glaring weakness SIU displayed the entire weekend — shooting.

The Salukis shot 34 percent from the field during the route, missed their first 11 shots and connected with only five of their first 32 field goal attempts.

"There's pretty much nothing you can do," said junior Bryan Turner, who finished the Creighton game 0-of-6 from the field. "It was like there was a lid on the rim."

Monday's performance took many SIU players by surprise, but the warning signs were there in the tournament's opening games.

Sophomore guard Darren Brooks went 3-of-11 from the field during SIU's 75-63 quarterfinal win over Illinois State and as the tournament went on, it became infectious.

The Salukis, who came into the tournament with a field goal percentage of nearly 48 percent, shot 39 percent in the first half and 44 percent

for the game in the semi-finals, but still managed to oust Southwest Missouri State from the tournament by a score of 64-55.

The game was close until about eight minutes to go when SIU, led by Jermaine Dearman's six points in the final five minutes, pulled away.

But the next game was against Creighton, and there would be no reprieve for a bad start or poor shooting. That lethal combination put the Salukis down 42-16 at the half and sealed SIU's fate.

SIU head coach Bruce Weber said he knew his team played poorly early, but the competition level was just low enough to squeak by with victories — a luxury not afforded to the Salukis Monday night.

"I think we were kind of lucky against Illinois State and Southwest that they just weren't good enough," Weber said of SIU's first two games. "We were ripe to kind of get beat, but our kids just kind of willed ourselves to win."

Starting center Sylvester Willis said the team's early missed shots doomed SIU because the Bluejays, unlike the Redbirds and Bears, do not give their opponents much room for error.

"We got off some bad shots early, and we did it in the first two games, but we did it against a real good team and it just caught up to us," Willis said.

Aside from saying they played poorly, the Salukis could not figure out why the bottom of the net was so elusive or why Creighton kicked

their teeth in, but Weber has a few theories.

Weber said that before the Creighton game, his team knew it had done all it needed to do to reach the NCAA tournament. Weber said he did not tell them, but he cannot prevent his players from logging onto sports websites and figuring it out for themselves.

He said that could have been a factor in the loss, but said it is possible his team was simply burned out from playing its last seven games in must-win situations.

"I think the whole thing caught up to them looking back," Weber said. "Sometimes you can't even see it coming, but when you win seven in a row, and every game is the biggest game, it just got to the point where it just took its toll on us."

"It overwhelmed us." It also did not help that when Weber shifted SIU to a motion offense in the Creighton game, his players threw up shots after only a few screens. He prefers using more of the shot clock to get off a decent shot.

That will be the primary focus in practice this week, and SIU hopes its adjustments will give SIU fans something to cheer about again.

The players do not want one bad loss to overshadow what they feel has been a tremendous season.

"The whole year's been great," sophomore Stetson Hairston said. "We've accomplished things people never thought we would do."

"We had a good season. [Creighton] kicked our asses, and we just gotta go out there and play no matter what happens."

Reporter Michael Brenner can be reached at mbrenner@dailyegyptian.com

“There's pretty much nothing you can do. It was like there was a lid on the rim.”

— Bryan Turner  
Saluki junior guard

# Seniors' farewell less than stellar

Jens Deju  
Daily Egyptian

ST. LOUIS — With just more than two minutes remaining in the championship game of the Missouri Valley Conference Tournament, SIU head coach Bruce Weber took his two seniors, Kent Williams and Jermaine Dearman, out of the game to an ovation from the crowd.

The problem is they did not come out of a title-clinching victory. Instead they were coming out of a 24-point loss to Creighton in a game televised nationally on ESPN.

As the players came off the court, Weber hugged both players and whispered a few words to them before they took their place on the bench. This is not the way it was supposed to end for two of the players most responsible for SIU's return to being a conference powerhouse.

In their four years Williams, Dearman and the third senior, David Carney, have been a part of 88 wins and two MVC regular season crowns. They also were part of the backbone to last seasons' Sweet 16 team.

Going into the MVC Tournament, the lone thing the seniors had yet to accomplish was winning the tournament. When they failed to achieve it, the pain was clear in the faces of the SIU seniors.

"I'm disappointed for the seniors because this was one of our goals," Weber said. "We wanted to celebrate, we wanted to cut down the nets. We just didn't play like we are capable of."

Although the final game was a disaster, it was not all bad for the Saluki seniors. Dearman came out a man possessed in the first two games, scoring a total of 43 points and pulling down 17 rebounds in wins over Illinois State and Southwest Missouri State.

His 26 points against Illinois State tied his career-high, which he set earlier this year against Wichita State. The rest of the Salukis realized Dearman had the hot hand and went to him as often as they could.

"Whoever gets hot we get the ball to them," said sophomore guard Darren Brooks. "[Dearman] played well the whole game offense and defense so we looked for him a lot and he did well."

Dearman was hesitant to take too much credit for his play and said he felt any of his

teammates could put up numbers just like he did.

"I feel like anybody can take over the game, it just depends on the situation," Dearman said.

Dearman was thought to be the runaway winner of tournament Most Valuable Player honors before laying an egg in the first half of the championship game against Creighton. The senior from Indianapolis tallied just four points in the half as Creighton went into halftime with a 26-point lead.

The second half was much better, with Dearman finishing with 10 points and 10 rebounds for his second double-double of the tournament, but the game was already out of reach for the Salukis.

After the game Dearman, who averaged 18 points and nine rebounds over the weekend, was named to the All-Tournament Team, but MVP honors went to Creighton's Kyle Korver.

Williams was seemingly the opposite of Dearman. The player who has led SIU the past four years in scoring could never get going offensively.

The Salukis second all-time leading scorer managed just 34 points in the three games.

Williams knew his shot was not falling, especially in the Creighton game where he hit just 4-of-12 shots, but he still was able to help the team in other ways. The senior from Mt. Vernon also fought foul trouble all weekend long.

The All-MVC First Teamer stepped up his intensity on the defensive end and did a good job of attracting defenders and pitching it to an open teammate to compensate for his lack of scoring.

"I was trying not to force things. If I had my shot, I was going to take it," Williams said. "The main thing I try to do is keep running and keep them worrying about me so other guys can get some things going."

SIMS head coach Barry Hinson, who compared Dearman to Superman after he dropped 28 points on the Bears earlier in the season, said even when he is off Williams demands respect because of how quickly he can wake up and bury a team.

"Kent's buttermilk," Hinson said. "What I mean by that is everybody's got to pay attention to where he is so it opens up for Dearman. Not

only is Kent buttermilk, he's spoiled buttermilk. He draws all sorts of flies."

The seniors will have one more chance to leave Saluki fans with a favorable impression when they face the Missouri Tigers in the first round of the NCAA Tournament.

The Salukis hope their last performance will be something more reminiscent of what they have meant over the past four years to the program they have helped build from the ground up.

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# Too depressed to eat

ST. LOUIS — Kyle Korver was alive, well and smiling. Creighton fans, who may have had a slight majority in the Savvis Center seats, were ecstatic.

Omaha had not been wiped off the map by a Russian nuke either, so I was ready to ask my Genie for a refund.

But I was in St. Louis and had a job to do, so I begrudgingly walked through a blanket of blue on the Savvis Center court and into a tunnel, waiting for the Saluki locker room to be opened to the media.

It's after losses like these that the greatest joy in the world suddenly becomes work.

I did not want to do interviews, and I knew the players were not too thrilled about it either. Standing by the closed double doors to the locker room, I debated what I would say. Normally, I would have a million questions written down, but my mind had been sidetracked by the shock of what took place on the court.

But I was about to receive another jolt of soul-vacuuming depression because when the doors finally opened, the scene was subdued enough to make Richard Simmons reach for Prozac.

With the exception of Jermaine Dearman, Kent Williams and Darren Brooks, who had gone to the official press conference, every Saluki player was leaning against a wall.

And not ordinary leaning — the wall, or locker, was the only thing allowing them to sustain vertically. Every player seemed to be devoid of neck muscles as well.

Stetson Hairston's forehead was perpendicular to the floor, Brad Korn was sitting in the far corner by himself and even Sylvester Willis was not smiling.

Bryan Turner had buried himself in his headphones, which is not unusual, but he was not walking around with the usual look of contentment on his face. He was sitting down and because he, like the rest of the team, had no neck muscles, his palms were the only things holding his head up.

Even more disturbing were the 15 to 20 boxes of Papa John's pizza stacked near the middle of the room. The players, coaches and trainers — so little that the remaining boxes were distributed to the media after the teams had left.

By the time the doors had opened, only

See BRENNER, page 9



DEREK ANDERSON - DAILY EGYPTIAN

SIU head coach Bruce Weber consoles Saluki senior Jermaine Dearman after removing him from the final two minutes of the 24-point loss to Creighton in the March 10 championship game televised nationally on ESPN.

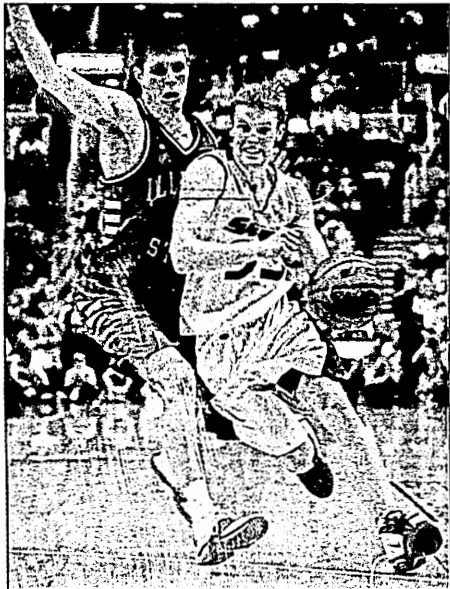
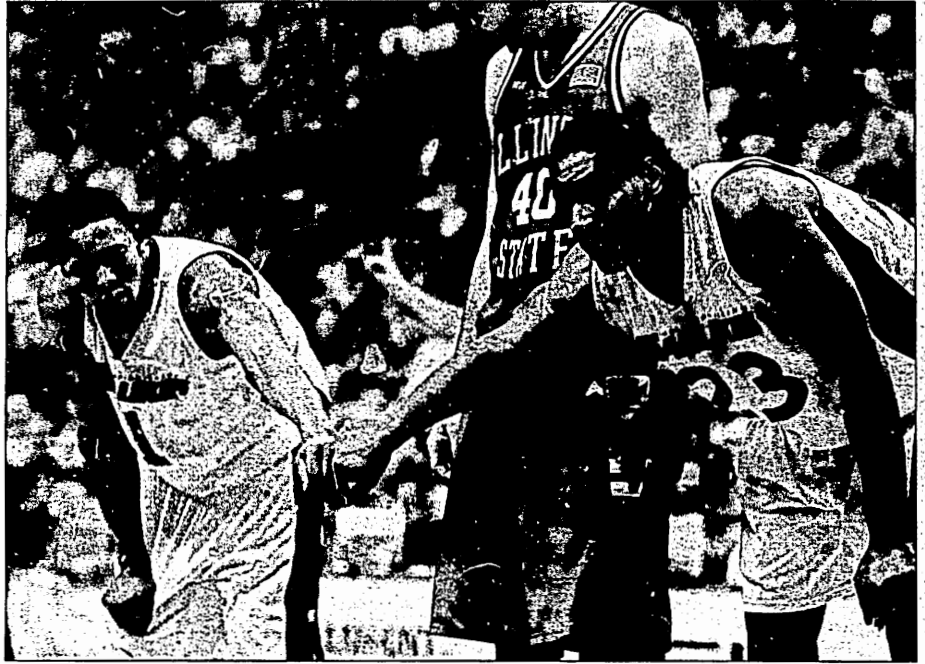


# MVC hoopla

Emotions took many forms during the Salukis' trek through the conference tournament last weekend

SIU sophomore guard Darren Brooks and senior forward Jermaine Dearman congratulate each other during an Illinois State free-throw attempt in the waning moments of the Salukis' first-round 75-63 victory over the Redbirds. Dearman set the pace of the game early with a monster dunk and finished strong with a total of 26 points to give the Salukis their first win of the tournament.

DEREK ANDERSON - DAILY EGYPTIAN



LESTER E. MURRAY - DAILY EGYPTIAN

(Above) SIU senior guard Kent Williams shows the look of determination he had throughout the MVC tournament. Williams will get one last chance in the NCAA tournament when the Salukis face Missouri Thursday in Indianapolis.

(Right) SIU senior forward Jermaine Dearman reaches out for a defensive rebound during the second half of the Dawgs' game against Illinois State. He finished the game with 12 rebounds and was a member of the all-tournament team.



SIU head coach Bruce Weber stares down an official during the March 9 game against Southwest Missouri State. The Salukis won 64-55 despite a controversial call that resulted in Kent Williams spending the majority of the first half on the bench.

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