Illinois’ concealed carry ban advances, continues to raise questions, debate

TIFFANY BLANCHETTE
Daily Egyptian

Legislation regarding gun ownership has become frequent in Illinois after Wisconsin became the 49th state to pass legislation allowing residents to obtain licenses to carry concealed weapons last November, making Illinois the last remaining state with a ban.

“Forty-nine other states can’t be wrong,” is the slogan for the Illinois State Rifle Association’s Illinois Gun Owners Lobby Day movement.

Gun owners marched March 7 in Springfield to show their support for their Second Amendment rights and “to remind legislators that they demand respect for their rights and that they aren’t going to go away,” according to the Illinois State Rifle Association’s website.

The same day, House Bill 5745, which would allow residents to carry concealed weapons in Illinois, was approved by the House Agriculture & Conservation Committee. After being approved by the committee, the bill has been scheduled for a second reading in the Illinois House, where amendments will be voted on.

Please see BAN | 4

Mike Purssel, of Murphysboro, awaits a sale Thursday at Purssel’s, his buy-sell-trade shop located on Country Club Road. “I sell all of my favorite stuff—guitars, guns and pool cues,” he said. “I’ve been here for 20 years.” Purssel said this is his second job, as he is a mechanic at the Jackson Country Club when he is not working at the store.

Carbondale Voting District
Voting for national primary and local elections will take place today at the below locations.

FEMA reconsiders federal assistance for Harrisburg

TARA KULASH
Daily Egyptian

Harrisburg Mayor Eric Gregg said he is optimistic FEMA will grant federal disaster assistance to his town.

After an EF4 tornado that hit Harrisburg Feb. 29 left seven dead and around 500 homes and 25 businesses damaged, FEMA initially denied the town’s request for federal assistance. Because of the work from Illinois officials such as Gov. Pat Quinn; Sen. Dick Durbin, D-Illinois; and Sen. Mark Kirk, R-Illinois, to appeal the decision, FEMA granted a second review of the town’s damage and will announce its decision shortly.

Quinn said he was extremely disappointed the request was initially denied.

“After personally surveying the damage and talking to many residents who lost their homes, I firmly believe federal assistance is crucial to help them begin the recovery process,” said in a report by the Southern Illinoisan.

Gregg said FEMA uses a formula to decide whether an area needs federal assistance. He said FEMA cited the denial of assistance because Harrisburg has adequate help from its surrounding state and volunteer efforts.

“But, obviously, we did not concur with that,” Gregg said.

Debbie Williams, a Harrisburg resident, said most towns move slowly to clean up after a disaster, but Harrisburg had cleared out much of the debris within hours after the tornado. She said it would be easy for the town to appear like it doesn’t need much assistance.

Gregg said otherwise.

“What we found was the homes that initially looked like they were structurally sound upon close examination, getting inside of them and looking through them … they were very unsafe and have to come down,” he said.

One example included a friend of Williams’.

“My daughter-in-law’s mother, her house structurally looks OK, but after an assessment they found it had been moved an inch and a half off the foundation,” Williams said.

If the assistance is granted, Gregg said it could come in many forms. He said the town could receive money or trailers to house people, but the city has to find out what it qualifies for first. There’s already a flood recovery project that allowed the town to hire 25 workers after record-breaking rains in April and May 2011. If that program could be redirected to the tornado recovery, Gregg said, about 75 to 100 more workers could be hired.

However, there’s still a chance FEMA could deny the federal assistance again. Gregg said it would be hard for the community, but he believes residents would push forward anyway.
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61°
Partly Cloudy / Windy
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57°
Scattered T-Storms
50% chance of precipitation

**Friday**
72°
53°
Isolated T-Storms
30% chance of precipitation

**Saturday**
70°
50°
Isolated T-Storms
30% chance of precipitation

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The Daily Egyptian is published by the students of Southern Illinois University Carbondale 50 weeks per year, with an average daily circulation of 20,000. Fall and spring semester editions run Monday through Friday. Summer editions run Tuesday through Thursday. All intersession editions will run on Wednesdays. Spring break and Thanksgiving editions are distributed on Mondays of the pertaining weeks. Free copies are distributed in the Carbondale, Murphyboro and Carterville communities. The Daily Egyptian online publication can be found at www.dailyEgyptian.com.

**Mission Statement**

The Daily Egyptian, the student-run newspaper of Southern Illinois University Carbondale, is committed to being a trusted source of news, information, commentary and public discourse, while helping readers understand the issues affecting their lives.

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University takes part in recycling competition

MATT DARAY

Daily Egyptian

It’s time to take out the trash at SIUC.

The university is in its fifth week of RecycleMania, a national competition for college recycling programs to promote waste reduction activities on campuses from Feb. 5 to March 30.

For eight weeks, more than 300 colleges in every state across the country and five provinces in Canada will report the amount of recycling and trash collected each week and be ranked in categories based on how much is recycled per capita.

Each school is ranked on the best total recycling rate and which school generates the least amount of trash. Each week, the ranks are updated to allow participating schools to track their performance against other colleges.

National recognition is given to the winning school of each category, such as recycling weight and waste minimization, on the RecycleMania website and in a national press release. Winning schools also receive an award made of recycled materials.

As of week five, SIUC ranks 216 out of 258 schools in its division for weekly recycling rate, according to RecycleMania’s website.

The university participated from 2007 through 2009. Because the position of recycling coordinator was vacant, SIUC went on a two-year hiatus from competing. Now SIUC is back in the game with a new coordinator.

SIUC’s Recycling Coordinator Megan Pulliam said she takes the competition seriously.

Pulliam, a graduate student in public administration from Peoria, said the goal of the event is to motivate students and faculty to recycle more and reduce waste while also raising awareness.

Alec Cooley, program manager for RecycleMania since 2007, said the program is designed to make recycling meaningful to college students by making it a competition appealing to a majority of students.

He said the program also raises awareness through a video competition on RecycleMania’s Facebook page, where visitors can vote on their favorite student-made video.

Padraig Elbert, a senior from Geneva studying sports administration, said he was not aware of the event but is now going to recycle more than he usually does. He said he thinks the event is a good idea, and everyone should try to do their part.

Other students showed less interest in the event.

Matt Hicks, a junior from Island Lake studying social work, said he was also unaware of the event but does not plan to do anything differently than normal. He said he does think it is a good idea and people should get involved with it, though he isn’t.

The program started as a challenge between Miami University of Ohio and Ohio State University in 2001. Now it is an independent program from RecycleMania, Inc., with a steering committee comprised of recycling managers from participating universities. The national nonprofit group Keep America Beautiful manages the event.

The contest uses several different measurement criteria, including the amount of trash removed from campus, food being vermicomposted and the amount of items recycled.

Participants can help by recycling paper, aluminum cans, cardboard, toner cartridges and plastic.

Matt Daray can be reached at mdaray@dailyEgyptian.com or 536-3311 ext. 253.
With legislative actions progressing, Todd Sigler, director of Department of Public Safety, said he is concerned about the impact a change to the concealed carry law would have at SIUC and other Illinois college campuses.

“The passing of a concealed carry bill would create an environment that is separate from what an educational environment is supposed to be,” Sigler said. “People would no longer be able to pursue their education without the concern that the person next to them may be carrying a weapon.”

He said if legislation such as this is going to be passed, it will need to be very clearly stated and include specific restrictions, limitations and requirements, especially in regards to locations such as schools and college campuses.

Illinois Gun Statutes’ Article 24 section one states a person who commits the offense of unlawful use of weapons when he or she knowingly carries a weapon somewhere other than his or her own land, home or business. A weapon is defined as any pistol, revolver, stun gun, taser or other firearm.

Sigler said the law is clear and there is no ambiguity as to whether weapons are allowed in certain situations, which he said is a benefit.

Until a final bill is passed, it is difficult to foresee any policies that may need to be implemented for a college campus, he said.

He said half the battle would deal with setting restrictions, requiring adequate training and getting people to exercise safe handling.

Environments that exist near a college campus, such as bars and parties, could create dangerous situations if a firearm is present. Sigler said it is important weapons are not brought into environments where alcohol is involved because of impaired judgment associated with drinking.

Morgan Schulte, a sophomore from Breese studying forestry, said the more accessible firearms are, the more likely people will use them.

“As a student, I would feel very uncomfortable knowing other students could be carrying concealed weapons, especially on weekends when alcohol is involved,” she said.

Sigler said to avoid reckless gun use, people need to take gun safety classes seriously.

“As long as someone chooses to be involved in the concealed carry situation, they need to continue to train, practice and stay very competent in the weapon,” Sigler said.

Schulte, who has been a certified National Rifle Association Range Safety Officer since May, said she would feel more secure if concealed carry was legal in Illinois.

She said because Illinois is the last state where concealed carry is illegal, it can learn from the other 49 by looking at hate crime and violence statistics, as well as how they have addressed problems with the law.

Creating a law with clear rules for urban areas such as Chicago as well as rural hunting areas such as southern Illinois may be difficult, Sigler said.

He said there are heightened concerns with passing the legislation in Illinois because of Chicago.

The introduction of more weapons into a densely populated area is something to approach with caution, he said.

“People in Chicago who carry weapons are breaking the law anyway, usually with criminal intentions,” said Mike Pursell, owner of Pursell’s gun and buy-sell-trade shop in Murphysboro.

“Other citizens in Chicago can’t protect themselves because of the ban on concealed carry,” Pursell said he believes the crime rate will drop, just as it has in every other state that has passed a law allowing concealed carry.

Statistics from the FBI’s Uniformed Crime Report of 2007 show that states with right-to-carry laws have a 46 percent lower robbery, 30 percent lower homicide rate and 12 percent lower aggravated assault rate, and a 22 percent lower overall violent crime rate than states that have laws.

Sigler said he thinks the body of knowledge that exists among the states with this kind of legislation hasn’t been around long enough to determine whether current concerns are legitimate.

Pursell said if legislation isn’t passed soon, there will be many upset law-abiding citizens.

“The pros and cons of the concealed carry issue are debated extensively on both sides of the fence,” Sigler said. “It just depends which side of the fence you fall down on.”

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EDITORIAL CARTOON

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TUESDAY, MARCH 20, 2012

GUEST COLUMN

DOYLE MCMANUS

Las Angeles Times

There's an old saying in Republican politics: Massachusetts produces only two exports — lobsters and liberals — and neither one travels well. That's what GOP strategists said in 1988 when then-Gov. Michael S. Dukakis was the Democratic presidential nominee, and in 2004, when Sen. John F. Kerry ran and lost.

But this year, they're glumly pondering whether that cranky old rule also applies to their own purported front-runner, former Gov. Mitt Romney. Romney's not really a liberal despite what his conservative critics say. But he sure hasn't always traveled well. Despite his claim to be the candidate with the broadest national appeal, Romney has failed to win anywhere in the Republican strongholds of the rural Midwest and the Deep South.

It's true that he's won primaries in some of the swing states that will be critical in this fall's general election campaign: Florida, Ohio, Michigan. But despite those victories, the campaign hasn't been good for Romney. Instead of helping him look more presidential, it's made him look testy and calculating. Instead of building up his numbers in the national polls, it's ground them down.

Last fall, as the campaign was getting under way, 36 percent of the nation's voters had a generally unfavorable opinion of Romney, according to Fox News polling. Now, after months of primary-battle nastiness, that number is up to 49 percent. And with three rival candidates all promising to stay in the race through the last primaries in June, he faces three more months of the same battering.

Romney's beginning to look a bit like a Republican version of Dukakis: a Massachusetts governor who might win the nomination by outlasting weak opponents but who may never quite win his party's heart — or the nation's.

That's partly because, as Dukakis did, Romney is selling himself as a better manager for the federal government, not as the leader of a grand crusade. It's not a message that gets the blood flowing. Yes, he says his campaign is "a battle for the soul of America," but he doesn't always sound as if he means it. Besides, his campaign rarely stays on that high plane for long. Instead, Romney's main message this month has been technical and tactical: that he's amassing more delegates than anyone else, so it's time for his rivals to get out of the way.

As a practical political forecast, that may be sound thinking. But as the rallying call for a political party, it has all the charm of the warning of the villainous Borg in "Star Trek": "Resistance is futile."

One apparent effect of that kind of campaign can be seen in a Gallup Poll released last week: Only about one-third of Republican voters now say they will support Romney enthusiastically, while 42 percent of voters indicated they would vote for him, but mainly as a vote against President Obama; 8 percent said they would vote for Obama; and 11 percent said they would stay home. It's not unusual for voters to take time reconciling themselves to their party's choice of a nominee. In 2008, many Hillary Rodham Clinton supporters who voted initially that they would never vote for Obama voted for him in the end. But here's the real danger sign for Romney in those Gallup results: He's performing significantly worse than the GOP's 2008 nominee, Sen. John McCain of Arizona, did four years ago. In early 2008, 47 percent of Republican voters said they would vote for McCain with enthusiasm — and back then, hard-core conservatives were condemning McCain as too moderate, much as they criticize Romney today.

That doesn't mean Republican voters won't turn out this fall; an earlier Gallup Poll found that GOP voters are more enthusiastic than Democrats about voting in general this year. But it does suggest that if Romney wins the nomination, he won't be starting his general election campaign with much of a head of steam.

Romney's still likely to grind out a victory in the delegate count and win in the nomination. But then again, that's precisely what Dukakis did, prevailing over a field that included Jesse Jackson, Dick Gephardt, Paul Simon, Gary Hart, Joe Biden and Al Gore. That year, 1988, was a low-enthusiasm year for voters in both parties. It's beginning to look as if 2012 will be one too.

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spring is in full bloom
Months of white and gray fade away as a new dawn comes. The sun breaks, releasing colors once trapped by the choking grasp of winter. What once was is no more, and color is again restored.

The songbirds sing, welcoming the first breath of a new season. Harsh winter winds warp into soft spring breezes, carrying hopes of soaring kites and sailing boats. The active air becomes soothingly calm.

Rain replenishes the soil, resurfacing the hard ground with soft grass. Lawns once caked with deceased remnants of fall are reborn through blossoms and bees. The warming day’s light grants gifts of new life.

This time becomes a moment of metamorphosis, remodeling the barren winter world with a radiant and vibrant scenery. In the saga of seasons, the winter’s tale is over, and the story of spring, a recitation of romance and beauty, has just begun.
“We’ll do our best to make the community whole again, and it may take a little more time than if we had the assistance from FEMA, but we’ll continue to work at it,” he said.

Lt. Gov. Sheila Simon visited Ridgway Friday to inspect the village’s damage. She said the devastation was sad and the hopes federal aid will come through, but if not, there will be low-interest loans available to the affected.

Keith Hake, a Harrisburg resident whose home was destroyed, said his town would be dramatically hurt if it doesn’t get federal aid.

“We need it terribly,” he said. “Here we are with casualties and homes destroyed.”

Hakes said he has insurance but isn’t sure how much of it will cover the damage to his property.

Williams said the lack of federal assistance would be detrimental, especially to those who don’t have insurance.

Some people may not be eligible to take out loans, Gregg said, but the city is doing everything it can to look into other options for them. He said the state has been a big help so far, though, by sending search and rescue crews and Illinois Department of Transportation trucks.

Gregg said he hasn’t heard back on FEMA’s decision yet, but he thinks it will be positive.

“We know that after reassessment, we are very optimistic that we’ll hear good news this time,” he said.

US makes modest gains in graduation rate

“Big gains are possible if you work hard at it, and if you don’t focus on it, you’re going to go backward,” said Robert Balfanz, a report author and director of the Everyone Graduates Center at the School of Education at Johns Hopkins University.

The increase in graduation rates was primarily because of growth in 12 states, with New York and Tennessee showing double-digit gains since 2002, according to the research. At the other end, 10 states had declines: Arizona, Arkansas, California, Connecticut, New Jersey, Nebraska, New Mexico, Nevada, Rhode Island and Utah.

So far, only Wisconsin has met the 90 percent benchmark, although Vermont is close.
Hiking

The group’s most recent venture from Hogg Bluff to Cedar Falls marked the second of the eight scheduled hikes this spring season. “I’ve hiked in the hills since college,” Johnson said. “And after nearly 40 years I never stop finding places that amaze me.”

Johnson said the outdoor enthusiasts who make up this spring’s trail guides are people from all walks of life who all share a common love for the Shawnee National Forest.

Mart Watson, an attorney from Eldorado, led the spring season’s first hike March 10 to an area in Pope County known as The Promised Land.

Watson said the weather thus far has been perfect, but as spring gives way to summer, the bugs and heat that follow make the early months of spring the best time to hit the trails of southern Illinois.

“If you’re looking for urban entertainment, you’re in the wrong place. If looking for a good time in a rural setting, you have to go out into the woods and find it.”
— Mart Watson

River to River spring 2012 guided hikes

March 24— Indian Wall Hike (War Bluff, Millstone Bluff, Stoneroot Bluff Meet at Shawnee Mart on Rt. 145 in Eddyville at 10:00 am.

March 31— Herod Bluff and Benham Ridge area
Meet at Herod Post Office on Rt. 134 at 10:00 a.m.

April 7— Dixon Springs to Lake Glendale
Meet at boat ramp parking lot, Lake Glendale, Rt. 145 South of Eddyville at 10:00 a.m.

April 14— Cove Hollow lower trail, Cedar Lake.
Meet at boat ramp parking on Boat Ramp Road at Cedar Lake at 10:00 a.m.

April 21— Max Creek Loop (the Vortex)
Meet at New Simpson School, Tunnel Hill, Rt. 451 at 10:00 a.m.

April 28— Williams Hill/ Sally Hollow
To be announced

Peyton Manning chooses Broncos, deal pending

ARNIE STAPLETON
Sunday, March 25

DENVER — The Denver Broncos got their man. Make that Peyton Manning.

Pending final contract negotiations, Manning will join John Elway’s Broncos with hopes of winning another Super Bowl.

So much for Tebowmania.

Still to be decided is what happens to last year’s quarterback sensation, Tim Tebow.

The Broncos and Manning agent Tom Condon spent Monday working out parameters of a deal expected to be worth $95 million over five years after the NFL’s only four-time MVP called the Broncos’ revered QB-tared executive, and told him he had decided to come to Denver.

Tennessee Titans owner Bud Adams also said Manning let him know that he had picked the Broncos. Adams released a statement Monday confirming the Titans were out of the running and later said to The Tennessean: “He called me himself and told me he wasn’t coming, that he made his mind up to go with Denver.”

Besides the Titans, the San Francisco 49ers had been a finalist in the chase for Manning, who turns 36 on Saturday and missed all of 2011 because of multiple neck surgeries.

ESPN first reported the reconciliation took place as Manning’s agent to negotiate the details of a deal with the Broncos, less than two weeks after the Indianapolis Colts released him rather than pay $28 million bonus.

“I think it’s a great place for him,”

Broncos defensive end Robert Ayers said outside the Broncos’ complex. “I don’t think he made a bad decision. I think he made a great decision. Hopefully we can prove him right and hopefully we can win a lot of games here.”

Despite being sidelined all of last season, Manning’s success in the past — the Colts averaged a 12-4 record from 2001-10 — made him by far this offseason’s top potential signing and perhaps the most desired free agent ever.

He was wooed by Denver to Hall of Fame quarterback Elway, who led the Broncos to two Super Bowl championships and now serves as their vice president of football operations.

Elway, who retired from the game after winning his second straight title in 1999, never sounded all that convinced Tebow was the answer at the sport’s most important position and now could trade the enormously popular but flawed QB.

Tebow energized the Broncos in leading them to the playoffs last season — and fans all over the country — but his play was erratic.

“I wouldn’t say I feel bad for him,”

Ayers said. “It’s a business. And I’m pretty sure Tim understands that... We wish him luck, no matter what he does. I hope he’s here. He’s a great leader, a great locker room guy.”

Manning was cut loose March 7 by the Colts. The move marked the end of an era, a 14-year alliance between the team that drafted Manning No. 1 overall and the QB who brought Indianapolis from football irrelevance to the 2007 Super Bowl title and a second appearance in the NFL championship game three years later.

But with Manning’s rehab continuing, the Colts decided it was time to rebuild from top to bottom, and they are expected to take Stanford quarterback Andrew Luck with the top pick in April’s draft.

“Two days after standing alongside Colts owner Jim Irsay at an emotional farewell news conference, Manning began his free agency tour in the place it was ending: Denver. Manning landed on Tebow’s turf with all the ramifications of star treatment — flown to town on a chartered plane, then spending the day with Elway, coach John Fox and general manager Brian Xanders.

From there, Manning crisscrossed the country in search of a new team, as various clubs courted a guy with more than 50,000 yards passing, nearly 400 touchdowns and 11 Pro Bowl selections. After Denver, next up was a meeting with the Arizona Cardinals, and he also spent time speaking with — or throwing for — the Titans, 49ers and Miami Dolphins, with TV cameras and even helicopters often on the trail. Joe Ragusa can be reached at jragusa@dailyEgyptian.com or 536-3311 ext. 255.
River to River Trail Society holds spring hikes in Shawnee Forest

STAFF COLUMN

CALEB MOTSINGER
Daily Egyptian

It’s spring in southern Illinois and the Shawnee National Forest has awoken from its winter slumber in the loveliest of ways. The spotted hulldises of fragrant flowers and blossoming trees offer hikers a comfortable, more visible environment than that of summer, with moderate spring temperatures better suited for longer hikes and camping.

The River to River Trail Society has six hills left this spring season, and with summertime on its way, guided hikes can serve as great way to learn about and discover the natural beauty of southern Illinois.

The 83-mile River to River Trail runs through the Shawnee National Forest between ElizabethTown on the Ohio River and Grand Tower on the Mississippi River. The trail links together many places of geographical beauty and historical significance across southern Illinois, with the trail itself having a deeply rooted history of its own.

The River to River Trail Society was founded by John O’Dell in the early 1990s to complete and maintain a trail once used by some of Illinois’ earliest immigrants.

O’Dell has published multiple River to River Trail Guides since the society’s founding, and though no longer coordinates group hikes, he remains the groups’ acting founder.

“This perspective is not the interpretation of this generation,” O’Dell wrote in the third edition of the River to River Trail Guide.

“It has been regarded with the same feeling as previous generations, some of which have left their names upon the land.”

The trail is divided into 24 sections, each assigned a director to maintain his or her section of the trail. As trail directors and other explorers of the Shawnee set out to lead a series of hikes scheduled through June, trail leader Eric Johnson said groups usually tend to average around 15 people, and membership is maintained only by showing up.

Please see HIKING | 11

NCAA tournament ends in disappointment for Valley teams

The two Missouri Valley Conference teams that expected to be in the NCAA tournament got in, but tough draws for Creighton and Wichita State put an end to their dreams of a Sweet 16.

Wichita State received the fifth seed in the South bracket, but the 12 seed happened to be last year’s Final Four Cinderella, Virginia Commonwealth. VCU (29-7) won the Colonial Athletic Association after a strong season, but didn’t have any wins over big teams to warrant a higher seed.

That didn’t stop VCU, who quickly jumped out to a 12-point lead against Wichita State in the first half of their March 15 matchup. Wichita State managed to climb back and took the lead with 2 minutes and five seconds left, but VCU eventually came out on top and ended the Shockers’ season.

Wichita State entered the MVC tournament as the favorite, but they bowed out to Illinois State in the semifinals. If they had made it further in the Valley tournament, who knows how high they would’ve been seeded?

“I’m not worried. Are you worried? You shouldn’t be,” Wichita State coach Gregg Marshall said in regards to where his team would play in the NCAA tournament after the March 3 loss to Illinois State.

To be fair, the reporter asked if Marshall thought his team would fall below a five seed in the NCAA tournament, which didn’t happen. But the team didn’t get an easy matchup, which could’ve been avoided if it performed better.

Creighton won the Valley tournament, so it did about as much as it could to help its seeding in the NCAA tournament. Creighton played well enough in the regular season to earn more than an eight seed, but a three-game stretch that included losses to Northern Iowa, Evansville and Wichita State doomed the team.

That said, Creighton still dispatched nine-seed Alabama 58-57 in a down-to-the-wire contest. Alabama was nationally ranked in the beginning of the year, so the win by Creighton wasn’t a small feat.

But right away, Creighton knew they would have to face North Carolina in the second round barring a historic upset, so the Bluejays never really had a shot. They lost 87-83 to the Tarheels in their second-round match March 18.

But the season isn’t over for fans of Valley basketball. Illinois State still has a shot at the National Invitational Tournament if it defeats Stanford in the second round. The game is scheduled to start after press time, so knock on wood the Redbirds are still alive by the time you read this. Otherwise, it was quite a mediocre year for Valley basketball.

Joe Raguais is the host of The Saluki Report! with Sam Donets and Kyle Fisher every Tuesday at 7 pm on WIDR.net The Revolution. Raguais can be reached at jfriguez@dailyEgyptian.com or 536-3311 ext. 269.

Basketball recruits still SIU bound for next season

JOE RAGUSA
Daily Egyptian

Travis Wilkins and Bobo Drummond, the last recruits of former basketball coach Chris Lowery, are still signed to their original letters of intent to play for the Salukis, Director of Media Services Tim Weber said.

Reports said Wilkins, a freshman guard for Snow College in Ephraim, Utah, asked for a release from his letter of intent in the wake of Lowery’s firing March 1. Weber said Saluki Athletics hasn’t received such a request from Wilkins.

Wilkins, 23, took two years off after he graduated high school in 2007 to go on a Mormon mission. He will be considered a sophomore in terms of eligibility next season.

“Wilkins is a dead-eye shooter that we desperately need,” Lowery said Nov. 10. “He’s had several games where he’s had six, seven or eight threes, and I don’t care if you’re open or not, that’s not a fluke.”

— Chris Lowery
former head coach
for men’s basketball

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Behind the Mic
JOE RAGUSA
Daily Egyptian

The two Missouri Valley Conference teams that expected to be in the NCAA tournament got