

Albury-Wodonga Bandits Complete Fairytale Season



Five years ago, Mohamed “Momo” Ntumba made the decision to leave his home and family in Kinshasa, Congo to come to Harrisburg, IL and play basketball for the Southeastern Illinois College Falcons. After two years – including a trip to the NJCAA National Tournament and graduating, Ntumba made the decision to transfer to the University of Southern Indiana to continue his education and to play basketball for the Screaming Eagles. In the spring of 2012, Ntumba accepted an offer to travel to Albury, Australia to begin his professional basketball career with the Albury-Wodonga Bandits.

In 2011, the Albury-Wodonga Bandits found themselves finishing the season in last place. Whether it was the influx of new players or a dedicated effort of the returning players, the club decided to focus on turning things around this season. Midway through the season, the Bandits learned of the sudden death of Allen McCowan, Kentucky native and Bandit basketball legend, to a heart attack at the age of 42. The team dedicated the 2012 season to his memory.

And, the fairytale season of a lifetime began...

The Albury-Wodonga Bandits finished the regular season with a respectable record of 16-12, earning a berth in the 2012 SEABL South Conference tournament. On September 1, 2012, the Bandits found themselves in the SEABL South Conference Championship game. By the end of the game, the Bandits had made SEABL history – becoming the first team to ever go from last place one season to Conference Champions the next. The Albury-Wodonga Bandits defeated the Knox Raider by a score of 77-69, earning their first conference title in a decade.

The Raiders led by as much as 12 in the first quarter before the Bandits took over, up by 4 at the break. They extended that lead with a 23-16 period to lead by 11 with a quarter to play. The margin reached as much as 15 before Knox pulled it back to something more respectable by the final siren.



The Bandits reached the Championship match on the back of an incredible performance from Mohamed Ntumba who recorded 22 points and 17 rebounds while Jazzmar Ferguson had 23 points, 7 rebounds and 4 assists.

On September 8, 2012, the Bandits met the East Conference Champions, Dandenong Rangers, in the SEABL Championship match. The Bandit's come-from-behind win over Dandenong has surely cemented them as a deserving and legitimate champion.

It was a strong start to the match for the Bandits, who limited Dandenong to just a three-pointer for the opening three-and-a-half minutes. But the Rangers went on a subsequent 18-8 run to lead by seven at quarter time. Dandenong carried that momentum into the second term, and halfway through the period, the Rangers had opened up a ten-point advantage. But back-to-back three's helped turn the tide for the Bandits, and they finished the half on an 11-4 run to trail by only 4 at the break.

The raucous band of Albury-Wodonga supporters became the sixth member of the Bandits in the second half with their deafening chants and cheers. Albury/Wodonga methodically chipped away at the deficit, tying up the match.

In the final two minutes, Matt de Koeyer struck from deep to put Albury/Wodonga ahead. A minute later, Daequon Montreal was pure on his shot for the Rangers, tying the game with 47 seconds to go. In a somewhat broken offensive play that followed, Jazzmar Ferguson missed from long range, but Mohamed Ntumba was there to dunk the ball home and put the Bandits ahead, 65-63. After a Dandenong time out, a three-point attempt was unsuccessful, whipping the legion of Bandits fans and players into a frenzy as the Bandits won the championship game 65-63.

For his 12 points, 5 rebounds and 2 assists, Nick Payne was awarded the Hugh McMeniman medal for Most Valuable Player. Ntumba recorded a double-double, finishing with 16 points and 12 rebounds (6 of them offensive). It was a memorable day for a club that turned around a horrid 2011 season in which they won just three games to become the SEABL Champions the following year.



Congratulations to Mohamed “Momo” Ntumba and the Albury-Wodonga Bandits – 2012 SEABL Champions!