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DOGS COMPLETE STUNNING RESURRECTION WITH SEC TITLE, NCAA TOURNAMENT BERTH



WHAT A REBOUND

By John Kaltefleiter
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ATLANTA — Cue the madness. Amid a stunning series of events spanning the past four days, Georgia has accomplished the unthinkable and is heading to the NCAA Tournament for the first time since 2002.

The Bulldogs put the finishing stroke on arguably the greatest run in the history of the SEC Tournament, beating Arkansas 66-57 in front of about 3,700 people Sunday at Alexander Memorial Coliseum on Georgia Tech's campus.

"Anything's possible; you've just got to believe in it," said senior point guard Sundiata Gaines, who was the tournament's most outstanding player. "It takes something special to win four games in three days. Nobody ever would've thought this could've happened."

Winning the league title gave Georgia the automatic berth in the NCAA Tournament. Georgia (17-16) enters as a No. 14 seed in the West Regional and will play third-seeded Xavier (27-6), the Atlantic 10 conference winner, on Thursday at the Verizon Center in Washing-



Photos by Trevor Frey/Staff

Georgia's Billy Humphrey talks to the media Sunday after the Dogs beat the Arkansas Razorbacks 66-57 to win the SEC Tournament at Alexander Memorial Coliseum in Atlanta. Top, Georgia coach Dennis Felton cheers after cutting down the net.

ton, D.C. Game time will be determined today. The winner meets Purdue or Baylor in Round 2.

Georgia arrived at the SEC Tournament as a bona fide dark horse. The Bulldogs finished the regular season along with Auburn as the SEC's two worst teams, winning just four league games.

Georgia started the tourney with a thrilling overtime victory over Ole Miss and steamed ahead after that.

Because a tornado plowed through downtown Atlanta on Friday night, the tournament was moved from the Georgia Dome to Alexander Memorial Coliseum, and the Bulldogs were forced to win

three more games, playing two Saturday. They beat Kentucky on a last-second 3-pointer by Zac Swaney and outlasted SEC West champion Mississippi State in a matter of 12 hours.

By Sunday afternoon, only Arkansas stood between Georgia and the Bulldogs' first SEC Tournament title since 1983, which was the same year Georgia reached its only Final Four. They completed the four-game sweep with the win over the Razorbacks, and in a bizarre scene, cut down the nets on home court of their chief rival.

Georgia coach Dennis Felton, whose tenure with the Bulldogs was in serious jeopardy before the tournament started, said it was the wildest four days of his coaching career.

"We started gaining momentum and believing in the core values and what we'd been working on," he said. "It was the leadership from the players in terms of not allowing themselves to give up. They told themselves, 'We can do this.'"

MORE COVERAGE IN SPORTS, PAGES B1, B4

SAME-SEX CLASSES

Greene rethinks changes

By Adam Thompson
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GREENSBORO — Greene County public school officials are rethinking their drastic, game-changing plan to separate boys and girls in every class next school year.

A revised proposal expected within two weeks likely will keep genders mixed at the county high school and allow parents to choose whether to enroll younger kids in the single-gender classes, schools Superintendent Shawn McCollough said last week.

Officials in the struggling school district last month stirred up national press coverage and mixed, often angry reactions from parents when they suddenly announced the single-gender schools mandate.



McCOLLOUGH

Although McCollough presented the plan as a bold, history-making move to lift dismal test scores, some experts said the plan as approved would violate federal civil rights law because it wouldn't give parents any choice.

Some parents in the largely black and low-income area around Greensboro balked at the plan because board members didn't take any public input before unanimously pushing through the single-gender schools plan in February.

During three public meetings that month — after the school board approved the change — McCollough had consultants explain to parents why his plan is the best option for the school system, which ranks toward the bottom in the state.

But trouble for officials began shortly after the Feb. 4 decision.

Two school board members rescinded their approval, saying they weren't aware of the extent of the overhaul, and moved last month to overturn it. They were defeated in a 3-2 vote.

And parents continued to speak out against the plan at contentious school board meetings.

See **PARENTS** on A4

DOWNED TREES, OUTAGES AMONG WORST REPORTED

No tornadoes confirmed in area

By Merritt Melancon
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Despite multiple tornado warnings and wind gusts of more than 30 mph Saturday afternoon, the Athens area escaped the worst of the damage caused by the spring storms that blanketed Georgia on Friday and Saturday.

Emergency services personnel in Clarke, Jackson, Oconee, Madison, Barrow and Oconee counties said Sunday that the storm's damage was limited to downed trees, temporary power outages and mostly minor roof damage.

Meteorologists with the National Weather Service in Peachtree City said they had not confirmed if there were any funnel clouds or tornadoes in the Athens area Saturday. The damage scattered around the Athens area could have been caused by strong straight-line winds, said Steve Nelson, a meteorologist at



Gov. Sonny Perdue tours the Georgia World Congress Center on Sunday. Officials were assessing the impact of tornado damage to downtown Atlanta. **Story on Page A4.**

John Amis/AP

the weather service.

Madison County Sheriff Clayton Lowe said he received reports of hail, isolated roof damage and fallen trees around his county and had seen some of the damage first-hand in his neighborhood near Hull.

"It blew about half of my barn's roof off," he said. "But I don't think it was a tornado or anything, just real strong wind."

Several trees fell around the county, but most of those had been cleared from the roadway Saturday night or early Sunday morning, Lowe said.

While there were reports of downed trees blocking highways and county roads in Jackson County on Saturday, the county's 911 operators reported that all had been cleared by noon Sunday.

See **NO TORNADES** on A4

INSIDE

FORECAST

67°

43°

FULL DETAILS, PAGE 2

- Blotter..... **A8**
- Calendar..... **C2**
- Classified..... **D1**
- Comics..... **C2,3**
- Crossword..... **C2**
- Horoscopes..... **C3**
- Living..... **C1**
- Local/State..... **A7**
- Lotteries..... **B2**
- Movies..... **C8**
- Obituaries..... **A7**
- Opinions..... **A6**
- Road Work..... **A7**
- Sports..... **B1**



HOLY WEEK BEGINS



Josh D. Weiss/Special
Mary Ann Ebong holds two palms crafted into the shape of a cross during the Palm Sunday Mass at St. Joseph Catholic Church on Prince Avenue in Athens.