

# Mean Green Season Recap Part I

Contributed by Courtland  
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The Mean Green basketball team had high hopes entering 2007. Though the team had played .500 ball for the past several years, many felt this had the potential to be Coach Jones's breakout season. JJ's squads had routinely gone on end of conference play swoons, which hung over the fan base throughout most of the 2006-2007 campaign. This however, was mostly avoided, in what was arguably the most successful season in NT Basketball since the Bill Blakely era.

The season tipped off on November 10th, 2006. The victim was Cameron(85-47), in what has become routine under JJ. Coach Jones is undefeated in season openers in his six seasons on campus. We really saw the potential the squad might have in our next contest versus UNC-Charlotte in front over five thousand 49ers fans. The Mean Green had 5 players in double figures led by KD's 20, as we beat them soundly (90-72). It was the first victory NT had ever posted over an Atlantic 10 school, the first in several milestones we would have throughout the course of the season.

The squad returned to Denton flying high. So far our games had been beat downs, but this was not to last. In the 34 games NT played this season, nearly half were decided by 4 points or less, in overtime, or both. UT-Arlington was the first, as the Moving Mavs fought us tooth and nail. UTA led most of the way, but when Kendrick Davis tied the game with 8.5 seconds, you had to like our chances in overtime. However, Jermaine Griffin hit a shot at the buzzer, which replays on NTV showed to be AFTER the horn. As it turns out, we had no monitors on the court, so the referees awarded the 'W' to UTA. KD was so angry he punched thru a glass door and had to sit out the next eight games. This may have been a blessing in disguise - as we would later learn.

The team went down to Houston to play Rice in another down to wire game. Rice's Dustin Almond, who at season's end would be named CUSA player of the year, poured in 38, but NT prevailed 71-69. We followed that up with a home victory over Tulsa. Despite the Golden Hurricanes being a shadow of their great teams from 8-15 years ago(having been to the Sweet 16 or further several times), this marked the 2nd consecutive season we had beaten them. A huge statement by our program, most would say. Michael Sturns led the way with 21, but Calvin Watson hit the big shot to seal the 65-63 win. The next victim was Texas State. Despite a tight first half, we put the pedal to the metal in the 2nd and won going away 95-77.

Our next game was a huge setback, as we ended November getting thumped by Nebraska in Lincoln. The game was never competitive as the Huskers opened up 18-2 on the Mean Green and never looked back. The final was 76-57, and probably wasn't that close. Needing a win badly after that debacle, we got it as we traveled to Nacogdoches to play SFA. The Lumberjacks played tenaciously, especially considering we shot 65.9% from the floor, as we never could put them away. Watson continued to lead in KD's absence as he lit up SFA for 21. Our interior which had shown some early signs, was also beginning to blossom as Keith Wooden added 15. The inside/outside combo was just deadly enough to hold on for a 76-70 victory. We continued our roadie, heading out to Thibodaux to play Nicholls State. The Colonels were 0-10 entering the game, but had been on the road for them all. In their home opener, they responded with a huge effort in a see saw affair. Watson and Williams provided the inside/outside combo on this night as the two put up nearly half our points. A late 3 by the Colonels went wide, sealing our 74-71 victory. At this point we were 7-2 and thinking big. Despite jumping out of league play twice more in weeks to come, Conference season was upon us and we appeared ready.