

PRESENCE

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UTA's wheelchair
Movin' Mavs win their
fourth consecutive
national championship

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On the cover

A confetti-flecked Jason Van Beek cuts down the net after leading the Movin' Mavs to their fourth consecutive National Intercollegiate Wheelchair Basketball championship.

Letters to the editor

Presence magazine welcomes any correspondence regarding its content. Please send your comments to Presence magazine, UTA Box 19137, Arlington, Texas, 76019. If you would like your comments published in Presence, please direct them to "Letters to the Editor." Include your name, address and, if you are a former student, the year(s) you attended or graduated from UTA and the degree you earned.

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Decade of Dominance

Movin' Mavs dazzle home crowd with fourth straight national title

By Mark Permenter

Don't mention the "D" word to Jim Hayes. The head coach of the four-time defending national champion wheelchair Movin' Mavs is uncomfortable with the *dynasty* label his team now carries.

"A dynasty implies that you're going to win over and over and over and over," said Hayes.

The Movin' Mavs have done just that — four times over, in fact.

UTA rolled past Illinois, 60-32, in March to capture its fourth consecutive National Intercollegiate Wheelchair Basketball Tournament (NIWBT) championship. The 28-point margin of victory was the largest in a title game in the tournament's 17-year history.

Hosting the five-game event for the first time, the University billed the title clash as "Championship Day UTA." Highlights included a pregame cookout, a halftime performance by the Dallas Cowboys Cheerleaders and a live Home Sports Entertainment television broadcast. With their nearest intercollegiate competitor in Dayton, Ohio, the Movin' Mavs previously were forced to play at tournament sites in the Midwest.

"The fans definitely helped us win this one," said Hayes. "They pumped us up and intimidated Illinois."

A raucous Texas Hall throng witnessed the Movin' Mavs race to a 12-2 lead and never trail. UTA used a 10-0 spurt at the end of the first half to take a 26-12 halftime advantage. Illinois never got closer than 14 points the rest of the way.

Senior center Jason Van Beek paced the Mavs with 21 points and 21 rebounds in the championship game.



Senior center Jason Van Beek blocks the shot of Matt Glowacti in UTA's semifinal victory over Wisconsin-Whitewater. Van Beek set tournament records for points (36) and field goals (18) in the game.

In UTA's 95-41 semifinal drubbing of Wisconsin-Whitewater, Van Beek set NIWBT records with 36 points and 18 field goals. His two-game totals earned him the tri-most valuable player award along with Mavs freshman Rusty Belknap and Southwest (Minn.) State senior Jared Johnson.

UTA placed four players on the All-America team. Van Beek and freshman Javier Gonzalez earned first-team All-America honors, while Belknap and junior Chhay Mak were named to the second-team squad.

Van Beek, UTA's all-time leading scorer and rebounder, finished his illustrious career with 3,003 points. Only five able-bodied players in the history of NCAA Division I men's basketball have surpassed the 3,000-

point mark. The Movin' Mavs lost one intercollegiate game in Van Beek's four years at the University.

"I never lost a final and that means a lot," said Van Beek, a public relations major from Chino, Calif. "But we're not just one player, we're a team."

The team concept is something Hayes emphasizes. Team chemistry, he says, has been a key to winning four straight national titles. The first step is recruiting talented players. The second and often more challenging task is blending those gifted individuals into a cohesive unit. Hayes has excelled at both.

His recruiting efforts have been facilitated by the availability of financial assistance for his players. In 1989, the

University awarded its first wheelchair athletic scholarships. UTA remains the only university nationwide to offer full scholarships to five of its 11 players, said Stan Labanowich, commissioner of the National Wheelchair Basketball Association.

"I work at probably the greatest university in the world when it comes to a real commitment to the advancement of disabled students," said Hayes.

"Based on the national picture, UTA is the premiere program from a funding and policy standpoint."

The Movin' Mavs are also the nation's premiere program on the basketball court. Since beginning intercollegiate play in 1989, UTA has posted a 36-3 overall record and a 12-2 mark in tournament action. The team's only loss in the last four years was a 49-45 decision at Illinois earlier this season.

The players' athletic accomplishments can be attributed not only to talent but also to hard work.



17th NIWB Tournament Results

Qualifying Game: Wisconsin-Whitewater 61, Southern Illinois 48

Semifinal: UTA 95, Wisconsin-Whitewater 41

Semifinal: Illinois 81, Southwest (Minn.) State 34

Consolation: Wisconsin-Whitewater 67, Southwest (Minn.) State 48

Championship: UTA 60, Illinois 32

"When we start practice in September, we set standards," said Hayes.

"One of them is that we're going to work 30 minutes longer every day than everyone else."

The Movin' Mavs have carried their on-court success into the classroom. Hayes stresses academics, noting that professional sports avenues are closed to wheelchair basketball players.

"When you look at our starting lineup, you're looking at a 3.3 grade point average or better," Hayes said.

"These guys are preparing academically, not as basketball players, to

make contributions in the work force."

Until they graduate, they'll continue making contributions on the basketball floor as well. With three All-Americans (Belknap, Mak and Gonzalez) along with starter Hans Ostergaard returning, UTA appears primed for a fifth consecutive national championship.

Concerned fans already are wondering how the Movin' Mavs will fare without Van Beek and his dominating inside game. Last year those same people questioned whether UTA could win a fourth title without Jesus Alamillo and Willie Hernandez, the team's first scholarship players and first All-Americans.

"As long as we are progressive with what we do, we can stay competitive," said Hayes. "We try to be the best team we can be year in and year out. If we do that, we will always be the team to beat."

In the meantime, please refrain from using the "D" word around him — at least until next year when the Movin' Mavs shoot for a fifth straight NIWB crown in Marshall, Minn.

"We have to win one more in a row to claim the '90s," he said.



Freshman point guard Javier Gonzalez was a first-team All-America selection.