

ONU NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIPS APPEARANCES RECAPS

2003 - Kansas City, Mo. (Municipal Auditorium)

Senior Tony Hodge hit a jumper at the buzzer to send the Tigers to the CCAC Tournament title game Coach Ralph Hodge's 500th victory – but there they fell to St. Xavier University (Ill.) and needed an at-large bid to qualify for the national tournament.

In the opening round, the Tigers finished with a flurry to knock off the 2001 national champion, Faulkner University (Ala.), 63-58. Junior Jeremy Riddle scored a game-high 17 points, while junior Marcus Lyte finished with 10 points, all in the second half.

Riddle again led all scorers with 26 points in an 83-78 second-round win over John Brown University (Ark.), one that required another strong finish by the Tigers. Lyte, Hodge and senior Andy McCormick all finished in double figures.

In the quarterfinals, the Tigers faced a familiar opponent in McKendree College (Ill.), which had beaten Olivet by 16 earlier in the season. This time, the game was closer, but McKendree escaped with a 64-62 win. Hodge led the Tigers with 25 points.

Tony Hodge and Scott Hodge are in the top 20 in school history for three-pointers and assists, respectively. The Tigers finished 23-14, their 15th straight 20-win season.

2006 - Kansas City, Mo. (Municipal Auditorium)

The Tigers qualified for the 2006 national tournament via an at-large bid and entered ranked No. 17 in the NAIA Top 25 poll, their highest-ever ranking entering the tournament. It was also their 12th appearance, the most by an Illinois school.

In the first round, sophomore Phil French came off the bench to tally 16 points and eight rebounds – both team highs – to lead the Tigers past 16th-seeded Wayland Baptist University (Texas). Junior Stan Chismark and seniors Zach Birkey and Zach Johnson reached double figures and helped the Tigers overcome 18 turnovers.

Then in the second round, the Tigers turned in perhaps their best performance of the season. The Tigers held top-ranked Mountain State University (W.Va.) to its lowest point total of the season in a 79-65 win to advance to the national quarterfinals. Chismark poured in 27 points, French scored 16 points, and Birkey chipped in 11 points and 10 assists.

The good fortune ended there, however. Against Oklahoma Baptist University, the same team that ended Olivet's run in 2002, the Tigers trailed by double digits early and didn't recover. French led the way with 16 points and six rebounds. Chismark earned NAIA All-America Third Team honors and was named to the NAIA All-Tournament Team. The Tigers finished 23-11.

2007 - Kansas City, Mo. (Municipal Auditorium)

After receiving a fourth straight at-large bid to the national tournament, the Tigers squared off in the first round against No. 7 Park University (Mo.), a team with two transfers from NCAA Division I Central Michigan University. The Tigers led by as many as 14 points but couldn't hold on in a 68-62 loss.

Junior Phil French scored 18 points to lead the Tigers, who fell in the first round for the first time since 1997. Ryan Paxson added 17 points, while Tyler Wallenfang and Josh Bronke chipped in 15 and 12, respectively.

NAIA All-American Stan Chismark, the team's second-leading scorer, missed the game with a knee injury. He finished his career as only the third player in school history to rank in the top 20 in scoring (1,433), rebounding (596) and assists (337). He was named a NAIA All-American Honorable Mention, and French was named to the NAIA All-America Second Team. The Tigers finished 19-10.

2008 - Kansas City, Mo. (Municipal Auditorium)

The Tigers' strength of schedule helped them earn a fifth-straight at-large bid, and they squared off in the first round against fifth-seeded Mountain State University (W.V.), which finished the regular season with a 30-2 record.

The Tigers' second-half comeback forced overtime. NAIA All-American Phil French fouled out, but Tyler Wallenfang made one of two free throws with 34 seconds left to send the game to another overtime. Mountain State rattled off 13 unanswered points in the second OT, and the Tigers fell 86-75.

French finished his Tigers' career 10th all-time in points (1,547), eighth in rebounds (765) and eighth in free throws made. The Tigers finished 17-15.

2010 - Kansas City, Mo. (Municipal Auditorium)

After a one-year absence, the Tigers returned to the national tournament to face 12th-seed Lee University (Tenn.) in the first round.

The Tigers struggled against Lee, which entered the tournament winning 13 of its last 14 games. Freshman Jordan Harks scored 10 and grabbed nine rebounds, but the effort wasn't enough in the 21-point loss.

The first-round loss ended the Tigers' career of NAIA All-American Tyler Wallenfang, who finished 15th in points (1,438) and 14th in rebounds (632). Josh Broken ended his career 10th in three-pointers (157) and 16th in assists (332). The Tigers finished 19-11.