

ALCORN STATE UNIVERSITY ATHLETICS



MEN'S BASKETBALL | 3/20/2017 8:32:00 AM

ROBINSON RESTORES MEN'S BASKETBALL PROGRAM ON AND OFF THE COURT

[Final 2016-17 Game Notes](#)

LORMAN, Miss. – It didn't take long for [Montez Robinson](#) to make an impact as head coach of the Alcorn State University men's basketball program.

A ferocious recruiter, Robinson inherited a squad that went 6-26 overall and 4-14 in conference play the year prior to his arrival. In just two seasons, he coached the Braves to back-to-back 13-5 campaigns in conference with a pair of second-place finishes. It was the first time Alcorn recorded consecutive winning seasons in 15 years.

As a result, Robinson was named the 2016-17 SWAC Coach of the Year. He was the first Alcorn coach to win that award since the great Davey L. Whitney in 2001-02.

"Coach Robinson has come in and done an awesome job. Not only has he improved the team but he's also improved the academic standing. He's an exciting coach and has great rapport with our student-athletes," said director of athletics [Derek Horne](#).

Last week, the Braves made a run to the finals of the SWAC Championships. It came after Alcorn placed two student-athletes on the All-Conference teams for the first time since 1998-99. Senior [Marquis Vance](#) was named to the All-Conference First-Team, and junior [Reginal Johnson](#) was honored on the All-Conference Second-Team. Johnson also went on to earn a spot on the SWAC All-Tournament Team.

The season was highlighted by an 11-game winning-streak. It was the fifth longest active streak in the nation. It was also the fourth longest in program history, and the longest since 1998-99. Alcorn also held a six-game road winning-streak which was the seventh-longest in the country.

The Braves ended 18-14 overall and went a perfect 7-0 in February.

"The season was a blessing. It was an honor to be around all these players, coaches, managers, etc. Going to work has been a joy, and that's hard for a lot of people to say. One of the things about working at the reservation at Alcorn is it's a family. People do a great job here at making you feel welcome. I'm just thankful for the University for giving me the opportunity to coach here when they didn't have to," Robinson said after the finals against Texas Southern.

Alcorn's enormous turnaround garnered national attention as Robinson was a finalist for both the 2016 Ben Jobe National Coach of the Year and 2016 Joe B. Hall National Coach of the Year awards.

"When I first came to Alcorn, I saw its impressive vision for its basketball program," said Robinson. "I couldn't wait to start working with the players and help build a foundation of success."

Though, improving Alcorn athletically was only half the battle.

If the Braves were going to go any further they first had to take care of issues off the court. Robinson took over for a program that was under NCAA sanctions for low Academic Progress Rate (APR) scores. The sanctions included a postseason ban.

Robinson took matters into his own hands by recruiting better students first-and-foremost. His recruiting classes average a 2.97 grade point average.

"When I came in our team grade point average was at 2.0. We were able to raise it to a 2.5 after one year. I had six guys with a 3.0 or better and four who were All-SWAC academically," Robinson said. "We just wanted to recruit better student-athletes."

Robinson's academic resurgence paid off as the NCAA saw noticeable improvement. If all stays the same by the end of the 2016-17 school year, Alcorn will have all of its sanctions removed moving forward.

"Due to the recent academic success of our athletic programs, no bans have been issued for subsequent years," said Jason Cable, assistant vice president for athletic compliance and academic services. "Specifically, the hiring of a head coach committed to academics and the change in culture brought by his staff to the men's basketball program exemplify and will continue to be the academic standard of excellence at Alcorn State University."

After the 2015-16 season ended, Robinson revamped his coaching staff by bringing in three new assistants. They included the 2003-04 SWAC Newcomer of the Year and All-Conference First-Team honoree Delvin Thompson who played at Alcorn, Derek Thompson who has over 10 years of collegiate coaching experience and Frank Popieski who spent three years at Florida State before helping coach numerous All-Atlantic Sun performers at Stetson.

"I'm really thankful to have Delvin, Derek and Frank on my staff. They each brought their own dynamic to the team and they all had a lot of energy that our guys were able feed off of," said Robinson. "In order to have championship teams you have to have a championship staff. I needed to bring in guys that would go to work for us and elevate us to the very top of the standings."

Moving forward, Alcorn will continue its strive to be the top program in the league both athletically and academically.

"We want to not only win championships, but also have all of our student-athletes earn degrees when it's all said and done," Robinson said.

In 2017-18, the Braves will return two of their top three leading scorers in Johnson and junior A.J. Mosby who both averaged in double-figures. Alcorn has also signed a pair of newcomers to its roster already. It added Troymain Crosby, a 6-4 combo guard from Laurel, Mississippi, and Rolando Rodgers, a 6-9 power forward from the British Virgin Islands. Both players will have four years of eligibility at Alcorn.

#FearTheBrave

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