



Saving the Best for Last

By Paul Seebeck

Gregg Smith — all 6-10, 285 pounds of him — was hoisted in the air by students who stormed Reese Court after the Eagles won their first-ever Big Sky Tournament basketball championship.

"It took them two tries, but they got me up," says Smith, laughing. "I couldn't believe they got me in the air. Everybody should get a chance to be up there."

Smith, a senior center who always understood what his role on the team was, saved his best for last. Six points and four rebounds in the second half

of that championship game — double his career average — plus a blocked shot and a steal made a huge impact on the team.

Afterwards, Ray Giacoletti told Smith: "You were the difference tonight." Smith was moved: "Coach and I have been together for five years. It was satisfying for me to hear that I helped the team."

As good as Smith was in that game at Reese Court, he was even better in the NCAA Tournament against Oklahoma State. The big man who scored an average 2.6 points per game during the season scored 12 of his team-high 16 points in the first half,

dominating play inside against a Big 12 team — for which he was named a Chevrolet Player of the Game by CBS Sports.

So, how does he explain his phenomenal success? After a hearty laugh, Smith, who is going on to a career as a school teacher and coach, says, "Oklahoma State focused so much on our guards, it allowed me to get in good position. That was joy to be able to do so well."

Joy for Eagles fans as well to see the never-complaining, all-around good guy have a stand-out game, his last game as a college athlete.

