

JACKSON -- Brandon Springer scored a game-high 20 points in his final game in a Bulldog uniform as Cumberland University's season came to an end with a 75-67 defeat at the hands of No. 10 Union University Saturday night at Fred DeLay Gymnasium in the semifinal round of the TranSouth Championships.

Cumberland ends its season with a 12-17 mark and will not make the NAIA National Championship field for the first time in three years after being bounced from the conference tourney by Union for the third time since 2005.

Springer drained a 3-pointer early in the first half as Cumberland took advantage of a Union turnover, giving the visitors a five-point lead. Union worked its way back over a seven-minute span, gaining the advantage for good when Keith Tolliver sank a trey of his own. Tolliver was one of five UU players to reach double figures, scoring a dozen points.

Cumberland shot just 31 percent in the first half, falling behind 33-24 at intermission. After Springer made a basket to cut the deficit to seven on the opening possession of the second half, Union responded with a 17-3 run to take its largest lead to that point at 19.

Trailing by 20 with 3:18 to play, Cumberland tried to complete an improbable comeback, scoring 15 of the last 18 points, but it was too little, too late as the book was closed on CU.

Lamar Brinkley scored 16 points and added eight rebounds, while Walter Simon contributed a dozen points and seven boards.

CU downs TNU -- Cumberland used a 17-2 spurt to start the second half and hung on to defeat rival Trevecca Nazarene, 90-83, in men's basketball action in the quarterfinals of the TranSouth Championships Thursday night at Moore Gymnasium.

The Bulldogs (12-16) got 29 points from TranSouth Conference Player of the Year Brandon Springer, but more importantly Walter Simon and Andrew Ayodeji both scored 16 points and Adrian Williamson came off the bench to net 12 points, as CU eliminated the Trojans (22-9) from the conference tournament for the second straight season.

Cumberland advanced to face top-seeded Union University in Jackson Saturday at 7 p.m. The Bulldogs and Union split their two games this season, each winning at home.

Springer scored eight points and Ayodeji had seven during the opening four minutes of the second half when the Bulldogs erased a three-point halftime deficit and took a 58-46 advantage. But the Trojans put together a 14-5 run in the middle of the second half, getting as close as 67-66 after a Keith Morris field goal with 7:29 remaining.

But Trevecca never took the lead, as the Bulldogs responded with a Simon putback and then

perhaps the biggest bucket of the game. Lindal Yarbrough missed a short jumper and CU got the ball out-of-bounds under the basket with just seven seconds left on the shot clock, but the Bulldogs lucked out with a media timeout forthcoming.

Head coach Lonnie Thompson drew up a play during the timeout and it worked it perfection, with Ayodeji inbounding the ball and then coming back to take a 3-pointer in the corner, nailing it to add to the Bulldogs lead.

Simon's floater in the lane as the shot clock was expiring with 3:37 to play was a big dagger for CU as well, and the Bulldogs knocked down 7-of-8 foul shots in the final 50 seconds to ice the victory.

Simon added a game-high 13 rebounds and Williamson grabbed six rebounds, all of them big it seemed.

Matthew Elliott almost single-handedly kept Trevecca in the game, scoring 20 points in the first half alone and 31 total for the game, making five 3-pointers and 8-of-10 free throws. Morris added 19 for TNU, but Michael France was limited to just 10 points on 4-for-13 shooting.

The Bulldogs started well offensively and took a 16-11 advantage in the first half after a fastbreak basket from Springer off a long pass by Yarbrough, but the Trojans answered with a 16-3 run, including 3-pointers from Elliott and France and a pair of buckets off the bench by JP Nyadaro.

Cumberland got back in the game later in the period with a 12-5 run, capped by a pair of Ayodeji free throws, and the Bulldogs took the lead late in the half with an old-fashioned 3-point play from Springer. But TNU answered again, this time with a pair of Elliott free throws to tie the game and then an Elliott trifecta with 3.5 seconds remaining in the half for a 44-41 Trojans lead at intermission.

CU shot a phenomenal 59 percent from the floor in the period but also committed 10 turnovers. Springer scored 15 points for the Bulldogs and Simon added eight. The Trojans made five 3-pointers, three by Elliott.