

Haase family celebrates NCAA tournament run



UAB Coach Jerod Haase cuts down the net after his team won the conference title. Photo/Carol Haase

By Kathryn Reed

UAB won't make it to the final dance, but that's OK. The men's basketball team wasn't ever expected to win its conference to advance to the NCAA tournament, let alone win a game at that tournament.

It was so unexpected that the coach's mom had to keep changing her flight – and not just once – and rent a car for a long drive to Louisville.

Carol Haase and her husband El Hug flew out to see Jerod Haase coach UAB in the C-USA tournament. The South Lake Tahoe couple kept extending their trip.

Haase grew up in South Lake Tahoe and as a senior was on South Tahoe High School's state championship team. He played his first year of college for Cal. The team made it to the NCAA Sweet 16. For a variety of reasons – including his father's death – Haase transferred to Kansas.

His dream was to always play in the NBA. Multiple fractured wrists prevented that from happening. The boy who first learned to dribble in third grade didn't have a strong enough wrist to muscle through the pros.

Instead, Haase turned to coaching. Under the guidance of Kansas coach Roy Williams, Haase learned the intricacies of what it takes to be a winning college coach. He was an assistant at Kansas and North Carolina before taking over the head coaching position at UAB three years ago.

This was UAB's first C-USA tournament title. The Blazers had not been to the NCAA tournament in a decade. They lost March 21 in the third round to UCLA, 92-75.



Carol and Jerod Haase outside the coach's house where neighbors had placed celebratory balloons. Photo/Provided

Carol Haase didn't get to see much of her son, but she did tag along on a few interviews.

"The fun thing I got to do with Jerod was go to Fox News and CBS and watch the live interview with the cameras and green room. That was great," Haase told *Lake Tahoe News*.

"Jerod was very calm. We didn't get to see him much. He was more subdued than anything. I could see his mind was going, going, going. We just kind of gave him space."

It also allowed Haase and Hug to spend more time with their

daughter-in-law and three grandchildren.

During the conference tournament family watched the game from behind the bench. For the NCAA tournament they were across the court, but still almost courtside.

Haase said the energy was electrifying. Only one college is at a hotel. Everyone is dressed in their respective college's clothing. A police escort is the norm. With the band traveling with the team, it added an extra flair. A small red carpet was rolled out wherever the team went.

What Coach Haase's future holds remains to be seen. He says he wants to return to UAB, but the C-USA Conference may not welcome the school because it has cut other athletic programs. With UAB's performance at the NCAA tournament, Haase's stock is even higher, so it's possible another college is looking for a coach of his caliber.