1966 Basketball Champions To Be Recognized

Contributed by Trenten Hilburn

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At The 74th Annual Brut Sun Bowl

EL PASO, Texas (December 13, 2007) - The UTEP Miners 1966 NCAA basketball champions will be recognized at the 74th annual Brut Sun Bowl on Dec. 31 at Sun Bowl Stadium, according to Sun Bowl Association Executive Director Bernie Olivas. "We are grateful to Helen of Troy, the title sponsor of the Brut Sun Bowl, for bringing the 1966 team and coaches together and making this recognition possible," said Olivas.

The 1966 Miners, who broke the color barrier in collegiate athletics by starting five African-American players in the championship game, were recently inducted into the Basketball Hall of Fame. UTEP, then known as Texas Western, upended an all-white Kentucky squad, 72-65.

Regarded by many as a key turning point in the civil rights movement in general and in the integration of college athletics in particular, the team's victory was seen as instrumental in transforming the history of college basketball. In the mid-1950s, Texas Western became the first college in a southern state to integrate its intercollegiate athletic teams. The highly publicized and inspirational 1966 championship game capped an amazing season for Texas Western. Coached by Hall of Famer Don Haskins and led by Bobby Joe Hill and David Lattin, Texas Western swept through the NCAA Tournament by defeating Oklahoma City, Cincinnati, Kansas, and Utah en route to the championship game.

In 2006, forty years after the Miners captured the national title, the story was made into a major motion picture, "Glory Road," the team visited the White House at the invitation of President George W. Bush, and all were honored at halftime of the 2006 NCAA national championship basketball game.

Speaking on the significance of the recognition, Gerald J. Rubin, Chairman of the Board and CEO of Helen of Troy, commented that "the players and coaches of the 1966 Texas Western basketball team deserve this honor. Their accomplishments were monumental and their stories compelling. The 74th Brut Sun Bowl may be one of the last opportunities for the team and Coach Haskins to re-unite, and what better place for it to happen than in El Paso, in front of 50,000 fans and millions watching on television."

The 2007 Brut Sun Bowl will feature No. 23 University of South Florida (9-3) against Oregon (8-4). The 74th Annual Brut Sun Bowl will kick off on Monday, Dec. 31 at noon (MST). CBS Sports will broadcast the game for the 40th consecutive year, which is the longest running partnership between a network and a bowl game. Ticket prices for the game are $15, $20, $30, $40, $50, and $60. Tickets can be purchased at the Sun Bowl Association office (915-533-4416, 800-915-2695 or ticket@sunbowl.org), online at www.ticketmaster.com or at any TicketMaster outlet.