SALT LAKE CITY — Down the stretch, Gonzaga coach Mark Few began treating it just like a road game.

The majority of the 14,176 inside EnergySolutions Arena had gravitated to underdog Southern University, sensing the possibility of a 16-seed knocking off a No. 1 for the first time in NCAA tournament history. They roared with every clutch Jaguars’ play – a ridiculous fadeaway 3-pointer by Derick Beltran, a pair of game-tying free throws by Brandon Moore, another score-knotting jumper by Beltran.

Few hunkered down with his players during the last three timeouts. “Hey, it’s fine,” he told them. “We’ve been in this (situation), where the whole place has kind of turned. I kept telling them, ‘It doesn’t matter. The crowd doesn’t get a say in this, the officials don’t get a say in this, nobody gets a say in what happens next except us.’ ”

Kevin Pangos said plenty with a jumper and a step-back 3. Gary Bell, one of the team’s quietest players, made some noise with a 3-pointer off a Pangos assist. When Pangos made a pair of free throws with 14.3 seconds left, top-seeded Gonzaga had finally turned back the fearless Jaguars, 64-58, on Thursday.

BULDOGS HOLD OFF JAGUARS, AVOID NCAA INFAMY

By Jim Meehan
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See GONZAGA, B15

GONZAGA head coach Mark Few huddles with team during timeout in second half.

JOHN BLANCHETTE

See BLANCHETTE, B15

Jaguars can have cheers, Zags will take the victory

SALT LAKE CITY — When a 16-seed finally does win one of these morality plays, it’s going to be for all the 16s over the years that should have won.

UNC Asheville.

Murray State.

Princeton.

Especially Princeton.

And Southern? Maybe even Southern, too. Hard to conclude specifically from the details of Gonzaga’s brush with Armageddon on Thursday that the Jaguars were more deserving, but it was obvious somebody found them more appealing.

“If I wasn’t coaching on the other sideline,” said the Bulldogs’ Mark Few, “they would be a tough team not to root for, you know?”

A good thought that sounds even better when not filtered through regret.

Instead, the Zags – No. 1 in the polls, the seed line and every hater’s burn list – endured and survived on behalf of all those No. 1s who found the weight of the distinction maybe a little too heavy.

Close calls

How many No. 1s or 2s (once the tournament expanded to 64 teams) have fared after winning their NCAA tournament opener by six or fewer points against their 16th-seeded opponents.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>First-round result</th>
<th>Finish</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1985</td>
<td>Michigan 75, Farleigh Dickinson 72</td>
<td>Lost in round of 32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1986</td>
<td>Illinois 91, McNeese State 71</td>
<td>Lost in Final Four</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1989</td>
<td>Oklahoma 72, East Tennessee St. 67</td>
<td>Lost in Sweet 16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1989</td>
<td>Georgetown 50, Princeton 49</td>
<td>Lost in Elite Eight</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1992</td>
<td>Michigan 72, Murray St. 71 (OT)</td>
<td>Lost in Sweet 16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>Kansas 75, Western Carolina 71</td>
<td>Lost in round of 32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>Gonzaga 84, Southern Utah State 58</td>
<td>Lost in round of 32</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

How men’s No. 1 seeds (since the tournament expanded to 64 teams) have fared after winning their NCAA tournament opener by six or fewer points against their 16th-seeded opponents.

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