Viking niners finish 2nd in CIAA tourney

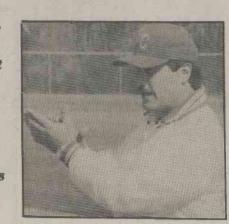
In only their second season in existance, the ECSU men's baseball team captured second place in last week-end's CIAA Tournament played at Ernie Shore Field, the home field for the Winston-Salem Spirits. The Spirits are a minor league farm team for the Chicago Cubs.

"For a second-year program, it says a lot about their desire to win," said coach Chuck Cullens. Coming in to the tournament with a record of 4-26, including two wins in the last week of the season, the Vikings finished fifth in the regular season standings.

In their first game in the tournament, ECSU took on Virginia State Friday morning. Rob Tiller started on the mound and pitched six-hitter; however, errors plagued the Viking defense, and Tiller took the loss.

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Chuck Cullens



Moving to the losers bracket of the tournament, the Vikings next met the Bulldogs of Bowie State. Steve Craig, who had beaten Bowie twice in the regular season, started on the hill for ECSU. Craig gave up four hits and three runs in two innings before being relieved by Steve Harrell. Harrell completed the game pitching a 9-7 victory for the Vikings. Harrell gave up two earned runs and three hits in his first inning but held the Bulldogs scoreless over the final five innings of play.

The Vikings were led at the plate by Walt Denby and Mike Whitehurst. Denby went three for four with four RBIs, while Whitehurst was two for three with two RBIs.

Friday night's win sent the Vikings into a Saturday match-up with Shaw University who had beaten ECSU twice in the regular

John Gurganus was the starting pitcher, and he recorded a 14-7 win. Harrell came on in the fifth to pick up the save.

Eric Spruill went three for four at the plate including one RBI to lead the Viking offensive attack. Whitehurst continued his hitting streak, going two for four with one RBI. Rob Tiller knocked in three runs with a triple in the fourth when the Vikings' sevenrun spurt sealed the victory for ECSU.

Immediately following the win over Shaw, the Vikings played St. Augustine with hopes of avenging four regular season losses to the Falcons.

In what one observer called "an awesome display of power," the Vikings pounded out 25 hits to take a 25-4 victory. Les Toler went the distance on the mound for ECSU and picked up his first win of the year.

Marvin Watson drove in seven runs in his five trips to the plate, including a three-run homer, three singles, and a double. Jeff Simpson cracked four hits in five at bats and knocked in one run, while Scott Bigbie and Whitehurst were both three for five with two RBIs. Denby was three for four with two RBIs, and Tiller was two for five with one RBI.

The Vikings' win over St. Augustine put ECSU in the championship game against Norfolk State. The nationally ranked Spartans, who had recorded four wins against the Vikings during the regular season, would have to be beaten twice in order for ECSU to take home the title.

The Vikings only senior, Shawn Curtis, drew the starting pitcher honors and pitched three and a third innings. Harrell came on in relief in the fifth inning, but the Vikings came up short, losing 7-5.

Tiller led the Vikings offensively in the final game with three hits in three at bats with two RBIs. Denby collected two hits in four trips to the plate, driving in two runs, while Watson knocked in the only other Viking run with a double in the sixth in-

"I was real proud of the kids," said Cullens of his team's performance in the tournament.

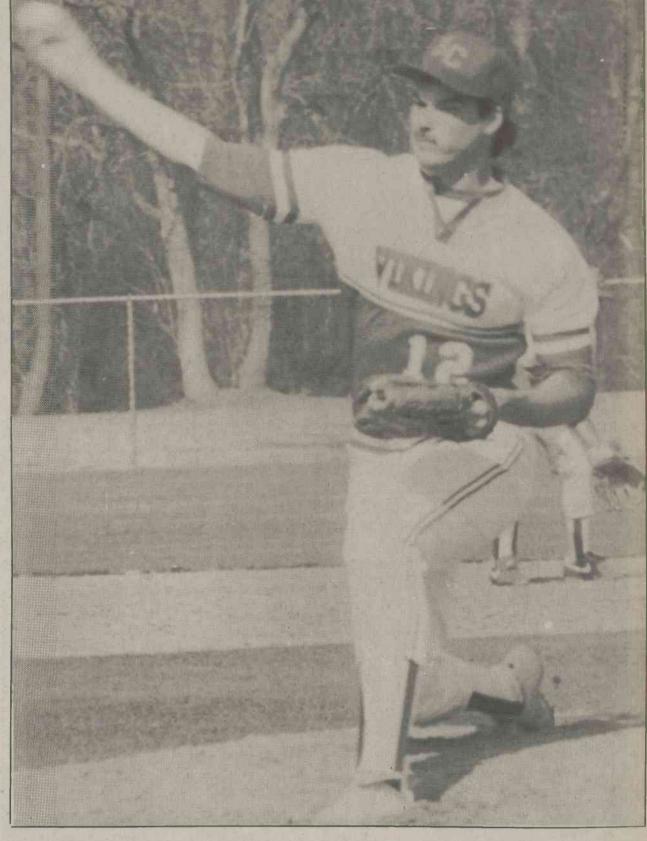
As a team, the Vikings hit .414 for the tournament. Denby led the Viking offensively hitting .632 with eight RBIs. Watson was another offensive plus for the Vikings with a .368 average that included 11 RBIs.

"If they play (next year) like they played in the tournament, we'll have a very exciting year."

Cullens says he hopes to sign two or three pitchers as well as a couple of catchers to finish his roster for next year. Since the only senior on the team is Shawn Curtis, Cullens is optimistic about his teams chances to win the CIAA in 1989.

Wayne Corprew, Norfleet Daniels, Eugene Evege, and Anthony Robbins are expected to return for the 1989 season, along with Scott Bigbie, Walt Denby, Jeffrey Simpson, Eric Spruill, Rob Tiller, Marvin Watson, and Mike Whitehurst. Also returning will be pitchers John Gurganus, Steve Harrell, Steve Craig, and Les

Cullens is assisted by Darrel McCalop.



Strike one!

With a determined look, John Gurganus, one of the Viking pitchers, delivers this pitch against Binghampton (N.Y.) State. It was determination like this that carried ECSU to the CIAA finals against Norfolk State.

Photo by Richard McIntire

Displaying professional form, Viking batter Mike

Whitehurst connects for a single to right field, against New York's Binghampton State.

'Togetherness' describes team

By Mike Whitehurst

If ECSU basketball coach laude Mackey could use one vord to describe the most recent eam of hoopsters, it would probibly be "togetherness."

On any given day these players nay be found practicing in Vaugian Center. Yes, practicing toether, long after the 1987-88 seaon has ended.

Why would a basketball team ontinue practicing more than a inded? According to Mackey, hese players are working on heir skills, independently, in orler to improve themselves as asketball players.

Although the Viking men's eam finished the 1987-88 season with a 9-18 record, Mackey beieves he "got a lot out of" this rear's team, and he feels the nost important accomplishment vas that the group was able to

grow as a team.' Mackey also points out that alhough there were ten freshmen in this year's squad, his "young nen held their own against the ikes of Norfolk State and Winston-Salem State, two nation-

illy ranked teams." The Vikings pulled off two maor upsets with victory of Norfolk state in Vaughan Center January 0 and a win over Winston-Salem State in the opening round of the

CIAA Tournament Feb. 25. Another psoitive aspect of the 1987-88 season was the perfornance of junior Ernie Griffin. Friffin shot 47% from the floor and 55% from the charity stripe while averaging 16.3 points per ame. Griffin not only led the eam in scoring, he also led the

game. He was the second in the total number of assist as well, feeding the ball in for a score 95 times during the year.

Griffin's efforts were supported by Tyson Ransom and James Eaton. Ransom averaged 12.8 points and 5.9 rebounds per game. Eaton, who averaged 30.2 minutes per game playing time, scored an average of 11.4 points per game. He also led the team in assists with 100 for the season.

Derrick Alston shot 58 per cent nonth after the season has from the floor on the season and averaged 5.4 points per game in 12.9 minutes each contest, while Darryl Riddick led the Vikings in 3-point shots, hitting 22 of 52 at-

> Although the 1987-88 season is now just another set of statistics, Mackey has already begun preparing for next year.

Mackey says he kept his team at the CIAA Tournament for the championship game "to help promote the idea of togetherness." He said he wanted his players to see what it felt like to win a conference championship. After the final game, Mackey said he gathered his team together on the court to talk about what they must do to be a better team next

Another way Mackey is trying to help next year's team involves scheduling. He has been busy trying to schedule some Division I schools for the 1988-89 season.

While next season seems too far off to consider, Mackey says he already has a plan: to win next year's CIAA Tournament. In the meantime, Mackey says the team is working, independently, to become better ball players and closer teammates.



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