

# Viking niners finish 2nd in CIAA tourney

In only their second season in existence, 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."*

**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. Har-

rell 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 season.

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' seven-run 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 inning.

"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 team's chances to win the CIAA in 1989.

Wayne Corprew, Norfleet Daniels, Eugene Eveye, 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 Toler.

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.

Photo by Richard McIntire

## 'Togetherness' describes team

By Mike Whitehurst

If ECSU basketball coach Claude Mackey could use one word to describe the most recent team of hoopsters, it would probably be "togetherness."

On any given day these players may be found practicing in Vaughan Center. Yes, practicing together, long after the 1987-88 season has ended.

Why would a basketball team continue practicing more than a month after the season has ended? According to Mackey, these players are working on their skills, independently, in order to improve themselves as basketball players.

Although the Viking men's team finished the 1987-88 season with a 9-18 record, Mackey believes he "got a lot out of" this year's team, and he feels the most important accomplishment was that the group was able to grow as a team.

Mackey also points out that although there were ten freshmen on this year's squad, his "young men held their own against the likes of Norfolk State and Winston-Salem State, two nationally ranked teams."

The Vikings pulled off two major upsets with victory of Norfolk State in Vaughan Center January 10 and a win over Winston-Salem State in the opening round of the CIAA Tournament Feb. 25.

Another positive aspect of the 1987-88 season was the performance of junior Ernie Griffin. Griffin shot 47% from the floor and 55% from the charity stripe while averaging 16.3 points per game. Griffin not only led the team in scoring, he also led the

team in rebounds with 7.5 per 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 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 attempts.

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 season.

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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