

# SPORTS

## Bishoops Beat CNU, Strengthen Hold on Conference Lead

By Decree Sports Staff

**Update: The Bishoops took another step toward a regular-season conference championship, spanking the Methodist Monarchs, 93-63, Saturday in Fayetteville. With 19 points, guard Trey Drake led an offensive attack that featured five players in double figures. The victory, the team's eighth straight, improved the NCWC record to 9-1 and kept the Bishoops two games ahead of Shenandoah in the USA South Conference.**

Conference leader Trey Drake scored 30 points and Alphonzo Frazier grabbed 14 rebounds as the Bishoops won a key USA South match-up, 90-80, before a fired-up home crowd February 6.

Wesleyan followed that win with a victory three days later at Everett Gymnasium, coming back from a 13-point half-time deficit to edge the Greensboro Pride, 79-78.

The wins solidified NC Wesleyan's first-place lead in the USA South Conference—two and a half games over Shenandoah—and extended its winning streak to seven. The Bishoops improved to 8-1 in the conference and 12-9 overall, making them the only team in the conference with an overall winning record.

In beating CNU, the Bishoops avenged their lone conference loss, 89-79, on January 13 in Newport News.

Drake (19 ppg) was deadly from the three-point arc, making 6 of 12 shots while recording three steals and four assists. In one game-changing, second-half play, he lofted an alley-oop pass to forward Alex Murray, whose thunderous dunk brought the crowd of 300-plus to its feet, forced the CNU coach to call a timeout, and chilled the ensuing play of the Captains, who dropped to 4-4, or three games behind the Bishoops.

"That was an exciting play," Coach John Thompson said. "That particular set play is the baseline for almost everything we do offensively."

## Women's Basketball Seeks to Rebuild Under New Head Coach

Rookie coach Artina Trader has seen her team endure a tough season, her team having lost its first 19 games of the 2009-2010 campaign.

Despite her team's record, Trader has seen several encouraging signs in her team's overall play, as the Bishoops have become more competitive as the season has progressed.

And then there's been the emergence of freshman forward Samantha Urquhart, whose 12.2 points per game leads the Bishoops and puts her 12th among the USA South Conference scoring leaders. She ranks 9th in the conference with 7.9 rebounds per game. Another freshman, forward Imani Graham (8.6 ppg), is the team's second-leading scorer.

The Decree sports staff conducted an email interview with Coach Trader in late January.

**Q.** What drew you to the Wesleyan job?

**A.** The experiences that I had as a student-athlete at Wesleyan made it an easy choice to return to campus. To be able to work with people who had such a positive impact on my life... Coach Brackett and Coach Thompson have been a part of my playing/coaching experience since 1995, and the opportunity to work with them was a no-brainer. One

There are several options off that set, but when you get the lob dunk, it is exciting. In Saturday's game, I thought it was particularly good for our fans and helped to get some energy going in the crowd."

The alley-oop was one of many slick passes thrown by Drake. "We have a deal—he can pass it behind his back, over his head, with a no-look; it just needs to be successful," his coach said. "Trey has improved so much. He came here with outstanding skills and talent, but he has worked hard to improve. And the thing is, he's still improving. He has gotten better in the last three or four weeks."

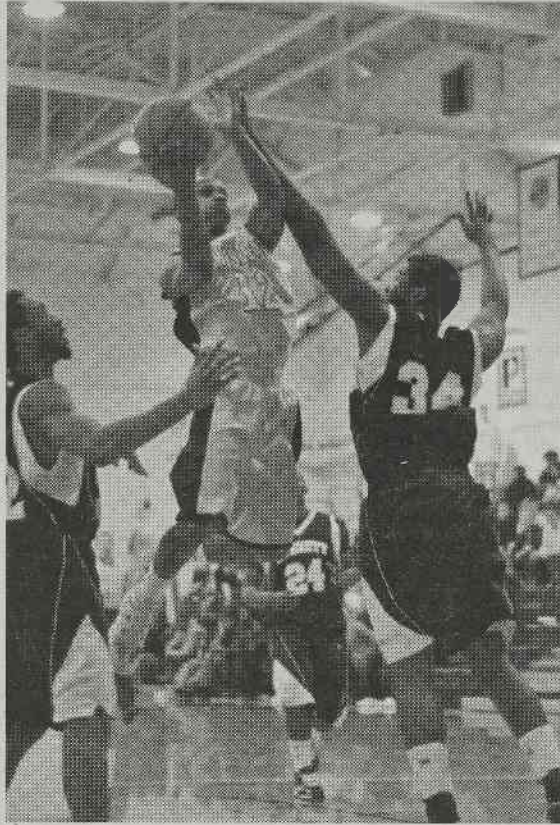
Against the Captains, Drake's fine play was complemented by Frazier, who completed a double-double (14 rebounds, 17 points) and provided the strong inside presence needed to counteract CNU's physical play.

"I had to bring extra energy and attack the glass," Frazier said. "We have enough scorers on the team. I figured if I did my part with rebounds, everything would take care of itself."

Recalling the previous CNU game, Coach Thompson said he saw a different Bishoops team in the rematch. "We just weren't very good when we played up there," he said. "I didn't think our focus was good. We did not play like the team that you saw on Saturday. We were clearly more determined,

more aggressive, and tougher. We simply made an effort to get the ball in the paint and attack. When we do that, we're normally pretty good."

Last Wednesday the Bishoops fell behind Greensboro, 41-28, but mounted a strong second-half comeback and took



Trey Drake drives to the hoop in recent action.

SI Photos

the lead with less than a minute left in the game.

After Greensboro's Adam Powell missed two free throws, sophomore forward Domarius Thomas put the Bishoops up by one point with a lay-up and a free throw as the clock ticked down to 12 seconds. The Pride in-bounded the ball and, with two seconds left, Wesleyan's Alex Murray made a game-saving block, rejecting a shot by Chakiris Moss. The rebound

student-athletes have adapted to the college game, while the veterans are understanding more what it takes to be competitive from game to game.

**Q.** Obviously, the season is off to a rough start. Compared to other teams you've played, what are Wesleyan's most glaring deficiencies?

**A.** We can't compare ourselves to other teams we have played. We're laying the foundation to return this program to the standards of the 90s, when Wesleyan went to two NCAA tournaments. This return will happen sooner than later but we will use the experiences of this season to get us to where we want to be.

**Q.** What have you been emphasizing in practice?

**A.** Improving on individual and team skills to become better as one unit, also on communicating on the court.

**Q.** What style of play would you like your players to be known for?

**A.** Hard workers who play every possession (offense and defense) like it's their last.

**Q.** What are your goals for the remainder of the season?

**A.** As with any season, if the record was above .500 or below .500, our goal is to improve with each game. There is always room for improvement.

**Q.** Talk about the steps that need to be taken to get your team to a .500 level and then become a consistent winner.

**A.** To become a consistent winner we will need continued improvement from the returning student-athletes and a successful recruiting class. The combination of veterans and youth should help the program take the needed steps to become an above .500 team. With anything, it will take hard work and that starts with me. I have to do my best to bring in recruiting classes every year that improve us as a unit.

**Q.** What are your primary objectives as you recruit for next season?

**A.** To recruit student-athletes that will make a positive impact on the Wesleyan campus both in the classroom and on the court.

came to Greensboro. After a timeout, the inbound pass was thrown to Moss, whose shot missed at the buzzer.

It was the second tough contest against Greensboro (2-7 in the conference, 9-13 overall) this season, as the Bishoops edged the Price, 74-70, on the road January 16.

On Wednesday, Thomas and Jarmel Arrington each recorded 14 points to lead a Bishoops attack that saw five players score in double figures.

Arrington (14 ppg) said such balance has been a key during Wesleyan's recent winning streak.

"On any given night, any particular player can take over the scoring load. We're not so dependent on one person. This is what separates this year's team from last year's," said Arrington who made 12 of 16 shots—including five three-pointers—en route to a team-high 35 points in Wesleyan's January 27 road win over Ferrum.

The team's current hot streak comes after a slow start. The Bishoops lost 7 of their first 10 non-conference games. But coaches and players believe that a tough early schedule has steered the team for a late-season run.

"We knew we were going to test ourselves early in the season," Coach Thompson said. "I think we could've played better, but I hope our tough opening schedule is helping now." The recent winning streak, he added, "is a tribute to what our players have done. They've stuck together, continued to work at it,

and made adjustments as necessary."

Drake offered a similar observation. "Our opening schedule was really tough, and that prepared us to battle now," said the senior point guard, who noted that the team came into the season with high expectations—"We wanted to win every game"—and remained positive despite the early losses. "We've got a ton of motivation. We practice every day like it's a game. We just try to bring it every day."

Drake and his teammates feel Wesleyan is quite capable of wresting the conference tournament title from Averett, which beat CNU in last year's championship game.

"The focus level is at an all-time high for my teammates and myself," Arrington said. "The key will be staying focused and taking each game one at a time and playing defense and rebounding. We control our own destiny at this point."

Coach Thompson echoed Arrington's comments. "We constantly remind the kids we have to stay focused," he said. "We haven't won anything yet. The only thing we can control is our next game."

As one of six seniors on the team, Arrington has been thrilled by Wesleyan's recent success. "All the wins stand out for me," he said, "because this is the first time in my whole career that I've beaten every team in the conference at least once."

## Bishoops Take the Long View Toward Baseball Season

Entering his 12th season as head baseball coach, Charlie Long will pilot a 2010 team that won last year's regular season and tournament championships in the USA South Conference.

His team's success earned Long his second conference Coach of the Year award in 2009, as Wesleyan made its 21st appearance in the NCAA tournament.

Despite last year's championship season, the Bishoops have been picked third in the conference pre-season poll.

Play will get under way February 19-21, when the Bishoops host the Coldwell Banker Tournament of Champions, with invited teams that include Emory University and Cortland State. Randolph-Macon will come to Rocky Mount for a game on the 24th.

Coach Long was interviewed prior to the season:

**Q.** Before last season, you lost several star players (e.g. Chris Pecora, Matt Smith) and it was legitimate to ask where the offense would come from. But the team had a fine season offensively and over all. Some observers might say that your team over-achieved. Were you surprised by the success?

**A.** I was not surprised by the success because of the team chemistry. We had a few bumps along the way; however, our leadership was outstanding and would not allow the team to quit. I was surprised by some of the individual results. The work that the individuals put in over their career proved to be worthwhile. Confidence is a fragile thing. When we played early, we invented ways to lose and felt like we would find a way to make that happen. When we got hot, we knew that no one would beat us. We came back in many situations and refused to quit.

**Q.** Last year you were 3-9 in February against mostly non-league opponents. Then in March, around the time the conference games began, your team caught fire, going 14-3 for the month and ultimately winning the conference. How do you account for the slow start and then the winning streak?

**A.** I think our goal every year is to play the best schedule we can possibly put together. If this means struggling early, we have to simply take it and learn from the experience. I would like to get off to a strong start and maintain that pace throughout. I honestly believe, however, that the depth of our league (ranked the best in the country) does not lend itself to the 40-win seasons we used to enjoy. My hope is to prepare our team by playing Cortland State, Emory, Lynchburg, Tufts and Heidelberg. All of these teams are tournament tested and make us better when we compete in our conference tournament.

**Q.** Talk about the key position players who return for 2010.

**A.** Justin Rahm and Zach Alexander are our key returners in the infield. Zach and Justin bring steady defense for us and provide a great

deal of power in the middle of the order. Daniel Moore will play right or center for us and hit in the top of the order. Joel Creff will start in left. Daniel and Joel give us lots of speed.

**Q.** Talk, in more detail, about your pitching. Who are the projected starters? Who looks to be your closer?

**A.** Our pitchers have quite a bit of experience. Max Knowles and Justin Diener will likely be our weekend starters. Max's out pitch is an effective changeup and Justin is a bulldog who goes right at the hitters. John Child and Andrew Webb return at the back end of the pen as well. John led the team in appearances and recorded 5 saves and Andrew picked up 5 saves as well. We have a great deal of confidence in them when the game is on the line. Kaleb Wessell and Richard Wall will also serve as starters this year. Each has come on strong and worked hard in the off season.

**Q.** Who are some returning, non-starters who will be in the mix for starting positions and key roles on the team?

**A.** Andrew Webb and Mark Buchanan will be battling for the final infield position at second or third. Pat Laffin will also look to take hold of an outfield position. Andrew and Mark are solid defensively and Pat brings more power to the lineup.

**Q.** Who are some freshmen we should be watching?

**A.** Freshmen to watch are Jake Swartout, Nick Digby, and JJ Allen. Jake has tremendous potential on the mound. He has a solid fastball. Nick and JJ are excellent hitters and should push for playing time. Tyler Clark and Mike McConnell will battle at the catching spot and should give us solid depth behind the plate. Transfers Denver Nixon, Chad Womble and Brian Allen will also play a key role in our success. Denver and Brian are extremely fast and Chad will play a key role in our pitching depth.

**Q.** Last year one of the big question marks entering the season was who would be your offensive catalysts. What are the main question marks for you and Coach Jones as you enter this season?

**A.** I am worried about our defense. With new players, getting everyone in the right place at the right time can be a struggle. I am also a little worried about the number of games we play early. Our pitchers will be tested from the start. Freshmen that are normally allowed a growing curve will be tossed into the mix right away. We have the talent to win but we will have to learn quickly.

**Q.** Talk a little about how the conference will shape up this season. Who are the early favorites?

**A.** I think Shenandoah will be the favorite. They have many of their players returning from last year's team. I believe that the league is so balanced. Balance is what makes coaching in the USA South so rewarding and excruciating at the same time.

## Upcoming Intramural Activities

Sport/Activity	Registration Dates	Activity Dates
4-on-4 Flag Football	2/15 - 2/26	3/8 - 4/21
5-on-5 Basketball	2/15 - 2/26	3/8 - 4/21
Foosball Tournament	2/15 - 2/26	3/8 - 4/21
Group Fitness-Yoga/Pilates	n/a	T/Th, 3/9 - 3/25
Wii Sports Tournaments	n/a	3/17, 3/24, & 3/31
FitWes: Exercise Across America	2/22 - 3/12	3/22 - 4/22
NCAA Tourny Pick Em	3/15 - 3/18	NCAA Tourney
Kickball Tournament	3/15 - 3/26	4/1 - 4/21
Sand Volleyball Tournament	3/15 - 3/26	4/1 - 4/21
Fac/Staff Softball Tournament	3/15 - 4/5	4/9 - 4/11
Spring Camping Trip	3/8 - 4/9	4/17 - 4/18

\*\*All activities subject to participation numbers