

WSSU peaking at right time?

From Page B2

high-powered St. Augustine's three nights later as the Falcons nearly slam-dunked the Rams out of their own gym in the final moments of an 81-60 drubbing.

"This team has some glaring weaknesses," said Gaines after the defeat. "Right now we are not in real good physical condition."

Not only were the Rams somewhat out of shape, but Russell was again having problems with his knees and his practice and playing time became limited.

John Watkins, the starting point guard at the beginning of the season, had lost confidence and

to once again take on St. Augustine's, which by now had solidified its hold on the Southern Division's top spot.

The Rams tried harder but the Falcons again came out on top 87-78. And Gaines again talked about his "lack-of's" after the game, though Falcon Coach Harvey Heartley wasn't about to agree wholeheartedly with him.

"Winston had a bad stretch tonight and the last time we played them they were out of shape," Heartley said. "Don't let Gaines' crying fool you. He has one of the better teams in this league and watch him come tournament



WSSU's Linwood Gorham drives against Fayetteville State (photo by James Parker).

"Don't let Gaines' crying fool you. He has one of the better teams in this league and watch him come tourney time."

-- St. Augustine's Harvey Heartley

relinquished his starting role to Alonzo Willis, a steadier ballhandler, but less of a scoring threat and much less of an imposing defensive player as well.

Still, Gaines' team won more consistently than it lost. The Rams got by both Livingstone and Fayetteville but were manhandled by North Carolina A&T in their first visit of the season to the Winston-Salem Coliseum.

"A&T has just what we don't have," moaned Gaines after the 78-60 shellacking. "They have Joe Binion to do their inside work and Eric Boyd and Jimmy Brown outside. And they don't throw the ball away."

At that point, the Rams looked like a team that could handle the mediocre teams but was an easy knockout for the heavyweights.

The Rams did little to change that impression when WSSU visited Raleigh

time."

Heartley just may have been right. Since that loss on Feb. 1, the Rams have reeled off six wins against a single loss. And even in the loss, against North Carolina A&T in Greensboro, the Rams led for much of the first half and played even with the taller, more talented Aggies three quarters of the game.

"The effort was good tonight," Gaines said after the game. "The kids are in better shape now and are playing better together."

The following night the Rams shook off a sluggish first half to outscore Fayetteville 64-37 in the second half of a 94-72 win.

The Rams proved they could combat a strong inside attack as they shut off the Broncos' twin towers of 6-8 William Person and 6-9 Ed James in the second half.

Gaines admitted that a change of strategy paid off in the game.

"We've been working on a three-quarter pick-up on defense as a tempo-setter," he said. "We'll have to do that type thing against teams with a strong inside attack or their big men will have a field day. I keep telling our kids that your

"The last week this team is starting to peak."

-- "Bighouse" Gaines

defense triggers your offense by setting up transition baskets."

The Rams apparently continued to heed their coach's words in their final regular-season game last Saturday night against Shaw. Their loss to the Bears early in January turned out to be the game that kept them from winning the Southern Division title and they got revenge in a big

way. Trailing 19-18 with 5:58 left in the first half, they outscored the Bears 16-2 over the remainder of the half to grab a 34-21 cushion at intermission and never looked back as they rolled to a 72-57 romp.

(6 for 8 from the field) four assists, two blocked shots and three steals.

"We had good balance on the boards tonight," said Gaines. "This last week the team is beginning to peak."

Gaines' players share that sentiment. "We are playing our best ball of the season now," said Vaughn. "This year we feel we are going into the tourney on the upswing."

It's been six long years since Gaines brought a CIAA tourney title back to Winston-Salem. And, even though he admits that this year's squad is a far cry from the team that lost a heartbreaker to eventual champion Hampton in the semi-finals last year, it may be peaking at just the right time: CIAA tournament time.

Opening the doors

From Page B2

the most sacred sport in America and certainly the most pompous.

The National Football League, which enjoys a cozy relationship with what is the biggest farm system in sports, refuses to touch underclassmen, whether they are still in school or whether they have long ago succumbed to grade-point averages that were never a match for their clockings in the 40-yard dash.

Let a Marcus Dupree or Herschel Walker suggest leaving college early, and the do-gooders scramble out of the woodwork, suggesting such is all but tantamount to trading computer secrets with the USSR.

It's a sickening farce.

On one hand, educators and coaches feed us the baloney that big-time athletes really are students, and it is their education that is foremost.

On the other hand, they tell us that an athlete should be treated just like any other student. But unlike other students, college football players can't go to work when they're ready to do so.

There is no reason why a football player as talented as Marcus Dupree, or even one who is not as blessed, should be prevented from casting his lot with the NFL or any other football league, regardless of his academic standing.

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In honor of wrestling champion **Geno Seegers, The Pepsi Cola Bottling Company of Winston-Salem will make a cash contribution to the East Forsyth Senior High School athletic program. Congratulations to Geno Seegers of East Forsyth, The Pepsi Prep Athlete of the Week.**

Listen each Wednesday at 8 p.m. on WSJS for Gene Overby TALKS SPORTS where he highlights Pepsi's Prep Athlete of the Week.

Black College Briefs

Howard to play ambitious schedule

By BARRY COOPER
Syndicated Columnist

WASHINGTON -- Howard University will play one of the most ambitious schedules of any team in black college baseball this spring. The Bison have announced a 51-game schedule, including a nine-game road trip through the South in mid-March. Among the teams Howard will play are Maryland, Pittsburgh, Furman, Georgia Tech, Georgia and Virginia Tech.

Jackson Dies

CHARLOTTE -- Edward L. Jackson, one of the biggest names in the history of Johnson C. Smith University athletics, died recently. His funeral was held in Washington, D.C.

Jackson took over a losing J.C. Smith football team and shaped it into a powerhouse in the 1940s. Jackson won 76 percent of his games at Smith, forging a 47-14-7 record.

He also coached the Smith basketball team, putting together a 148-56 record, including a 20-5 finish during the 1940-41 season.

Still No Game

DAYTONA BEACH, Fla. -- Bethune-Cookman College, still anxious to schedule a football game with archival Florida A&M, has continued its media blitz against the Rattlers. B-CC Coach Larry Little recently accused "recruiters from a rival institution" of spreading rumors that B-CC's athletic department is on the verge of financial collapse, and might have to drop football.

Though Little refused to be more specific, the implications were clear that he was talking about Florida A&M. The Rattlers, calling the allegations ridiculous, declined comment.

Little insisted B-CC football is here to stay. "I've never heard of the program being in trouble," he said. "And when Dr. (Oswald) Bronson (B-CC president) hired me, he told me he made a commitment that football is here to stay."

Little's accusations did nothing to help the already

stalemated talks between the two schools. The schools did not play last year, and most indications are that an agreement will not be reached for this year, either.

B-CC continues to insist that the game be played in Tampa Stadium, where it was played for five straight years before crowds of 30,000 or more.

Florida A&M wants this year's game played in its stadium in Tallahassee, which seats 25,500.

This And That

ORLANDO, Fla. -- Other black college tidbits: Grambling football Coach Eddie Robinson says he isn't worried about chasing the victory record set by the late Paul "Bear" Bryant.

Please see page B6

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