

Paris McWhirter.

Nicholson, the floor leader, averaged 12.6 points last season and led the team with 162 assists and 108 steals. This season she's averaging 20 points and six assists.

"Maria's so good," says Hearn, "that I don't know if it's possible for her to improve."

McWhirter is a power player inside. Using strength she gained pumping iron with the Union football players, McWhirter was averaging 25 points and 10 rebounds after four games.

The center is 6-3 New Yorker Veta Williams. Much-improved, she leads the CIAA in blocked shots while averaging 10 points and 14 rebounds a night.

Sylvia Walker, Wanda Wood, Karen Hurt, Jackie Gilcrest, Lisa Burns, Wanda Hobbs and twin sisters Nadine and Nathelma Walker, from Baltimore, make up the supporting cast.

Joining the team for the second semester is striking 6-2 Val Ellis, who transferred from Vanderbilt. Ellis, Williams and McWhirter give the Pantherettes an overpowering advantage on the backboards.

"We've definitely got the talent to go back to Springfield," says Hearn. "Last year, I sort of looked at it as

Coach Harris' team. Maybe if we can do it again, I'll feel like I've done something."

Actually, coaching is more of an avocation than a profession for Hearn.

He coaches the Pantherettes on a purely part-time basis.

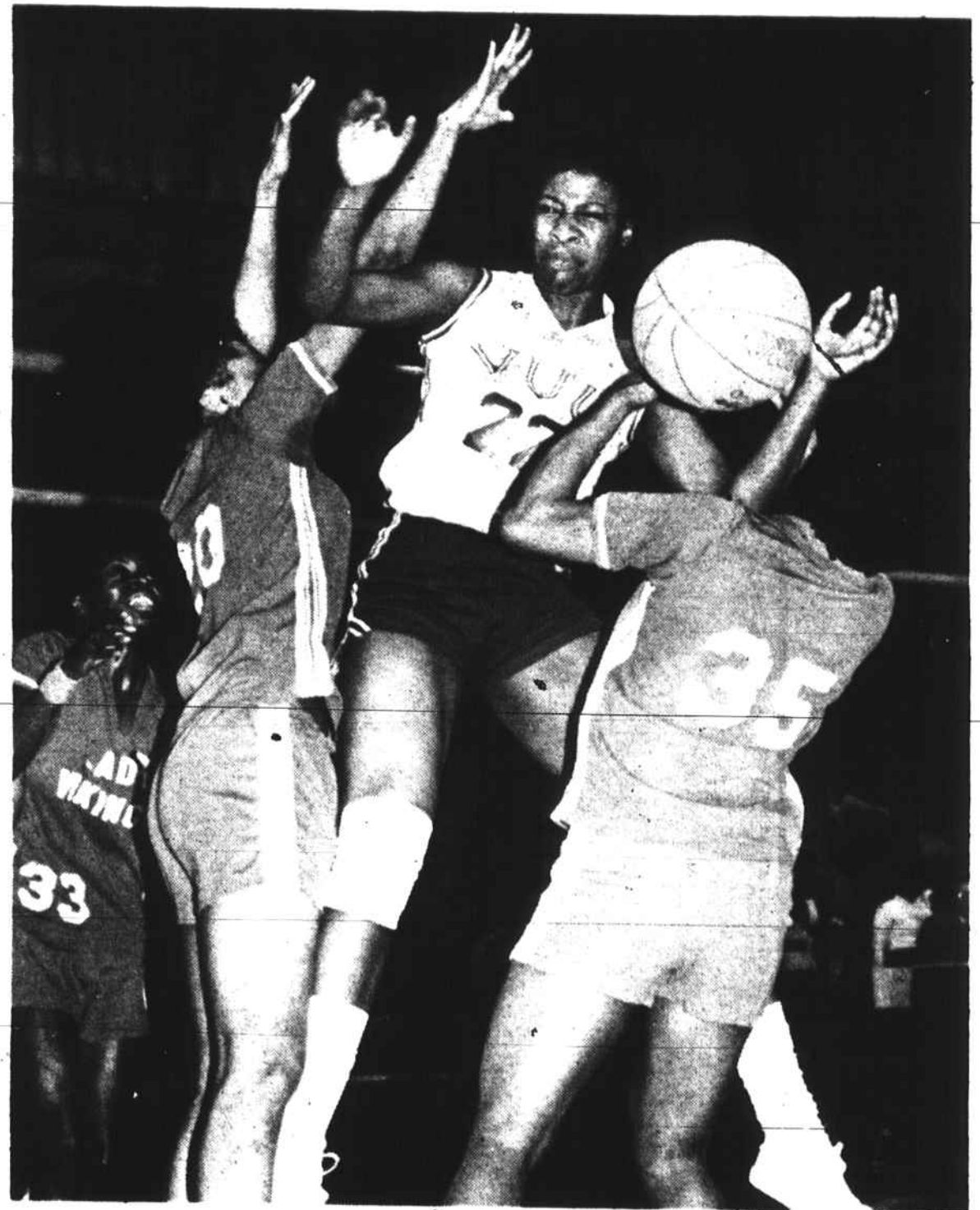
His full-time job is as Union's director of Upward Bound, a program designed to aid in the development of students with poor high school backgrounds. A native of rural Mathews, in eastern Virginia, Hearn was a high school basketball star with a 20-point average. He enrolled at Virginia State with visions of college hoop stardom, but his height (about 5-8) became a disadvantage on that level and he never played on the VSU varsity.

Hearn had very limited coaching experience when he accepted the job as Harris' assistant. As a head coach, he's outstanding at motivating his players, and instilling a "no-way-we-can lose" type of confidence.

He leaves "being a genius" to others.

And, whatever his style, Hearn was good enough to be named Division II National Coach of the Year last season by *Fast-Break* magazine.

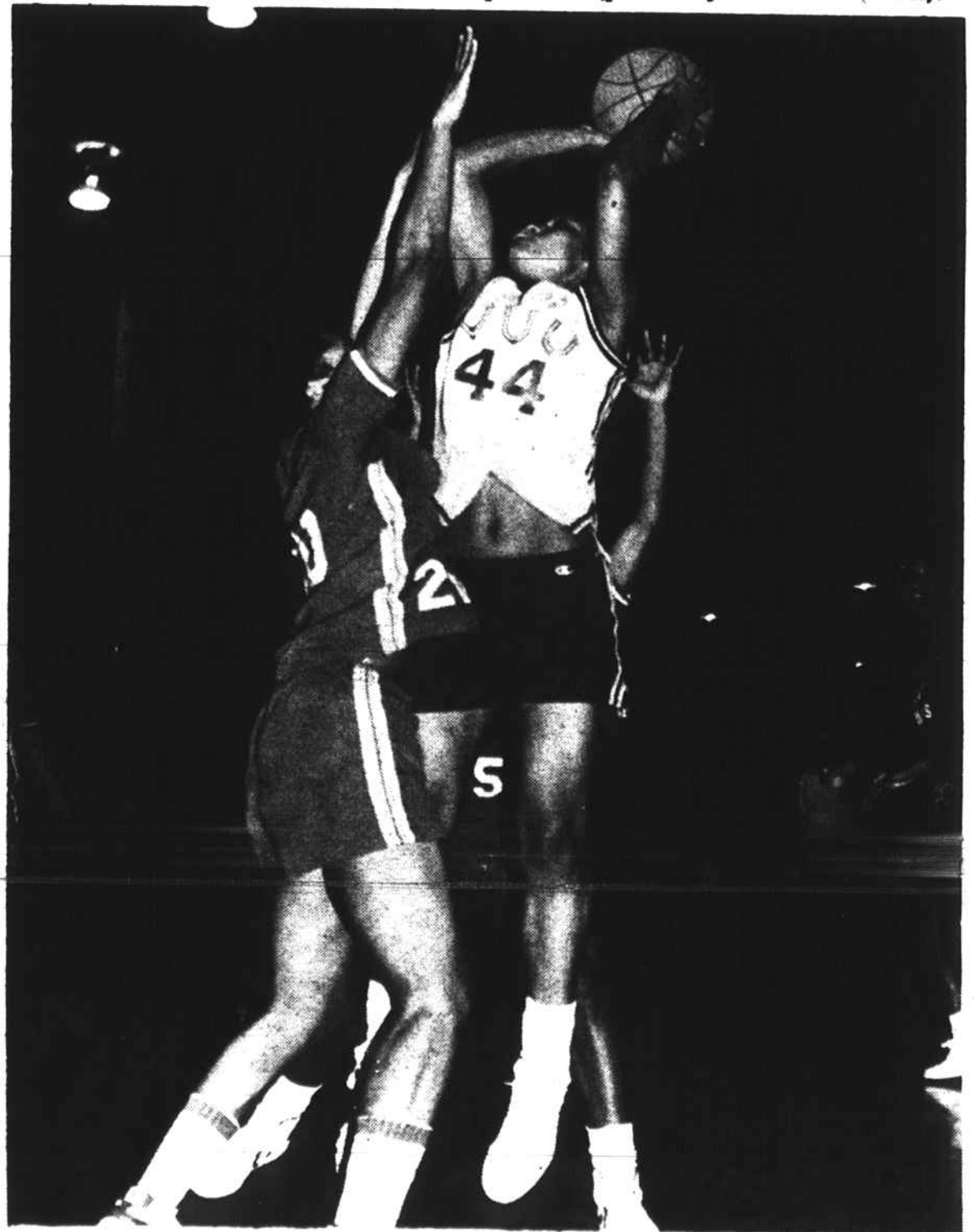
His biggest problem so far this year
Please see page 19



Veta Williams: not afraid to mix it up inside (photo by Marcus Wilson).



Junior Wanda Woods (12): keeping matters up in the air against Elizabeth City State (photo by Marcus Wilson).



Paris McWhirter: the other half of Union's D.C. Connection (photo by Marcus Wilson).