

Right Stuff *CONTINUED*

Rams, he tallied eight points in the first half as the Spartans built a 32-22 advantage. But, with WSSU's Kevin Vaughn shadowing him throughout the final 20 minutes, Pope managed only one additional point, hitting a technical foul shot at the 16:48 mark.

At that juncture, Norfolk held a commanding 43-25 lead. But the Spartans found themselves in a dogfight a little over eight minutes later as the Rams clawed back to within three, 46-43.

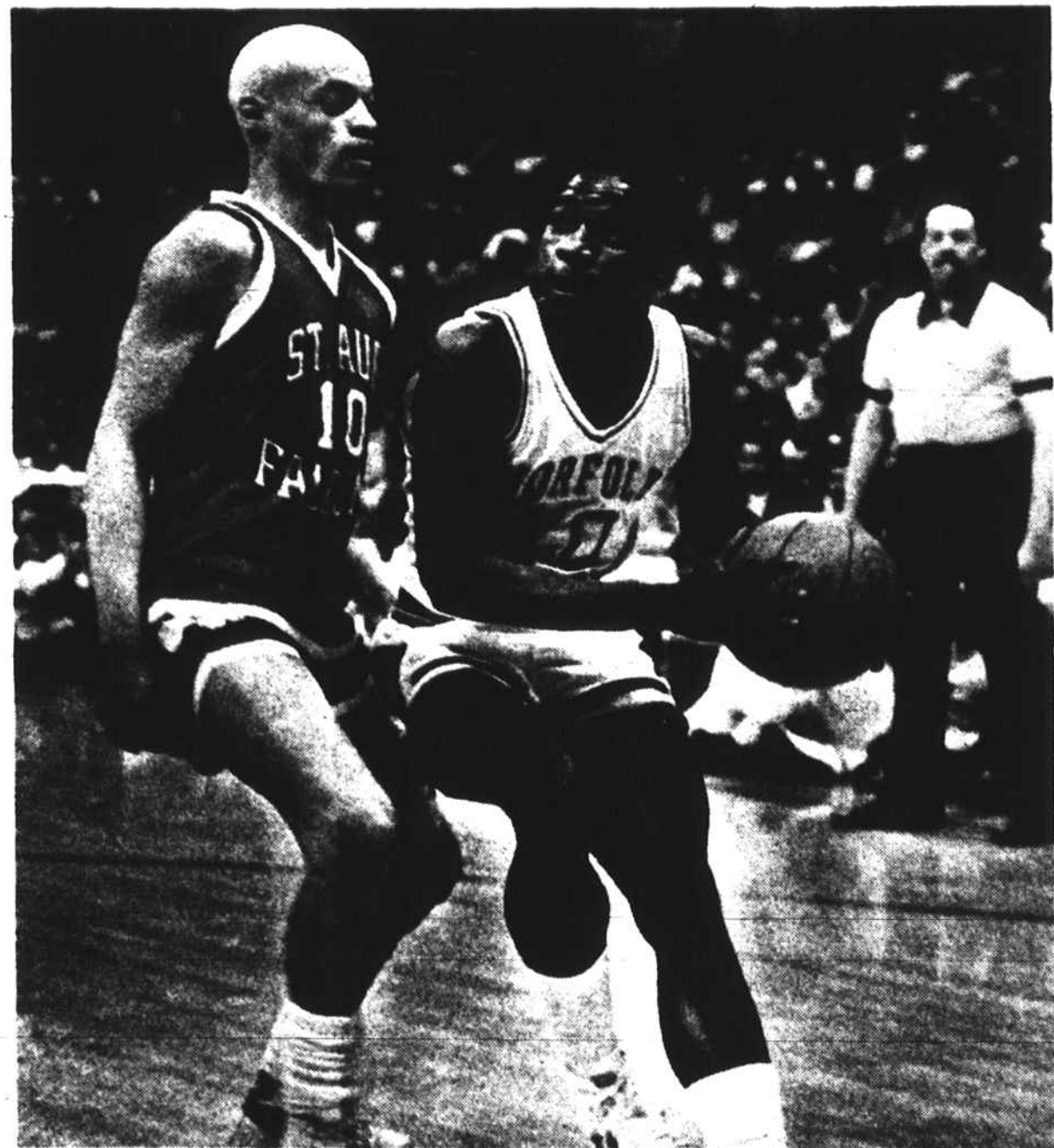
And, after nearly eight more minutes of frantic physical and defensive play, Christian found his team's advantage sliced to a precarious one point. The cushion grew slightly more comfortable when Mullen's 18-footer with 24 seconds left gave Norfolk a 63-60 lead.

Christian then seemed ready to do some fighting himself as he moved toward Gaines and the 6-5, 290-pound Ram coach in turn approached his 5-8, 175-pound counterpart. Referee John Russell settled the argument, sending both men back to their benches and decreeing that the clock be set back to six seconds.

The Rams then lost the ball out of bounds and Barry Mitchell ended the scoring by sinking one of two free throws with three seconds left.

Gaines and Christian did not shake hands after the game and both seemed less than cool toward one another during their post-game interviews.

"I went over to shake his hand after the game and he headed toward his lockerroom," said Gaines of Chris-



A Spartan Effort

Norfolk State freshman guard Ralph Tally: a savior to his teammates and a pain in the you-know-where for St. Augustine's (photo by James Parker).

on the clock and I couldn't let that happen. After the game he went to his bench and I went to the lockerroom to pray. 'House' is a great psych man, you know."

While Christian personally avoided a battle, his team found itself in another war in the title game against the South's top seed, St. Augustine's, the following night.

Still smarting from the memory of a last-second dunk by the Spartans' Tim Allen that cost them a shot at the title game last season, the Falcons spotted Norfolk a basket off the opening tip but responded with the game's next six points.

The Spartans got only two free throws from Tally over the next seven and a half minutes and missed an incredible 17 floor shots in a row. But, relying on their defense, they trailed only 10-4. Then, after producing three quick turnovers, they knotted the game at 10 on an inside basket by sixth-man Albert Gatling.

St. Augustine's built a 20-13 lead over the next three minutes but the Spartans mounted a comeback. Pope, who scored only one basket in the first half, picked up his third foul at the 4:27 mark with his team trailing 21-19. But the Spartans didn't waver as they grabbed a 29-28 lead at the half on two Tally free throws with six seconds left.

The Spartans trailed 36-35 in the second half when Pope was whistled for his fourth foul at the 15:08 mark. He was replaced by Gatling, a 6-4 sophomore from Hampton who quick-

ly asserted himself. His conversion of back-to-back one-and-one free throws gave Norfolk a 44-38 lead with 12:27 left and St. Augustine's never led again.

Pope re-entered the contest at the 4:32 mark with the Spartans holding a 60-50 advantage. He would add a basket 30 seconds later and two free throws with 46 seconds left to help hold off a Falcon rally that fell four points short in the 68-64 win.

Christian, in a much better mood than after the semifinal win, chewed his ever-present toothpick and talked about his team's play in the early going. "We were missing easy shots at the beginning of the game and St. Augustine's was playing very tough defense," he said, admitting he was a little worried. "But, when we took the lead going in at the half, I felt a little better. We have played better in the second half all year and I didn't think we would shoot as badly as we did in the first half."

Christian said he was not all surprised by the fine performance of Gatling off the bench. "He has been our sixth man off the bench and he has contributed all year long," Christian said.

As for his team playing better with all-American Pope riding the bench, Christian said, "David is the leader of this team even when he is on the bench. Did you see him yelling instructions and encouraging the team while he was sitting there? Besides, when you have a player like David and he goes to the bench, the other team will sometimes

"This team played excellent defense all year. It really paid off for us in the tournament."

--Norfolk State's Charles Christian

WSSU called time with 17 seconds left and got a shot off with nine seconds left; it missed, but the rebound was knocked out of bounds by the Spartans.

The clock was allowed to run down to three seconds and, when Winston-Salem State Coach "Bighouse" Gaines protested at the scorer's table, Christian joined him and the two exchanged words.

Christian. "I wasn't going to chase him all over the damn place to shake his hand. Maybe he wanted to talk to his grandmother or something. He has the number one team in the nation and there is no reason for him to act like that."

Christian told a slightly different story. "That kind of stuff is just normal with Gaines and me," he said. "He wanted all nine seconds put back



Upstart Rams

Winston-Salem State's Roger Mason fires a jumper over Virginia State in the quarterfinals (photo by Joe Daniels).