

Rams lose heartbreaker

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This One's Good!

Tyrone Smith of Winston-Salem State boots a 33-yard field goal to narrow the margin against Norfolk State in the CIAA championship game. Smith later missed a field goal in the final seconds that would have given the Rams the CIAA title (photo by James Parker).

The Spartans, who were only 5-5 a year ago, seemed equally stunned that they had won.

"On their field goal attempt in the final seconds, I turned my back and, when the crowd roared, I turned around and saw the ball come down and hit the upright," said Norfolk quarterback Willie Gillus. "It was a great feeling."

For Bailey, the fateful bounce was the fitting culmination of a fairy-tale season.

"This is the most fulfilling championship I've ever had," said Bailey, who coached Virginia Union to the past three conference titles before joining his alma mater this year. "These guys had to start from scratch and just gave a heroic effort this season."

"This is a day we have worked hard for since the beginning of practice in August," Bailey said. "They didn't have any doubts about what they wanted. They never took their eyes off of the prize."

Neither, apparently, did Winston-Salem State. From the outset, it was obvious that the teams were evenly-matched. The Rams and Spartans are both talented teams that share the same offensive scheme as well as coaching philosophy. The opening quarter was a chess game with Bailey and Ram mentor Hayes feeling each other out.

Hayes got the upper hand early when the Rams won the toss and elected to kick. The play worked as, two plays after kickoff, Norfolk's Tony Johnson fumbled on the Ram 25-yard line and WSSU linebacker Mark Wallace pounced on the ball.

After the Rams failed to get

their initial first down of the game, Tyrone Smith kicked a 40-yard field goal that gave WSSU a 3-0 lead. WSSU had a chance to pick up a first down on the kick as Smith was roughed, but Hayes, playing the percentages, refused to take the points off the board, leaving the score 3-0.

The Spartans came back to take a 7-3 lead, the big play for Norfolk a 57-yard run by Johnson, who raced to the Ram 12. Though the WSSU defense stiffened, a defensive holding penalty gave the Spartans first and goal at the 4 and Norfolk eventually scored.

After the quarter ended 7-3, the Rams came back with a seven-play drive of their own that culminated in another Smith field goal, closing the gap to 7-6. The Rams used timely passing by Winbush to tight end Harry Giles for most of their yardage, but failed to convert a third and four at the Spartan 16.

On the next Norfolk scoring drive, the supposedly strong-run, no-pass Spartans surprised the Rams by successfully taking to the air: Gillus, subbing for the injured Raynard Revels, made good on several short tosses and got an interference call on the Ram secondary that moved the ball from the Norfolk 48 to the Ram 30.

"We knew that Winston-Salem had a good run defense, so we were prepared to throw against them," said Gillus, who was named the game's most valuable player. "We used play-action passes to get their defensive backs to come up and then we were able to get our receivers behind them."

The Spartans didn't come away with a touchdown, but kicker Dale Browder did connect on a record 43-yard field go to extend Norfolk's lead to 10-6.

The Spartans took a commanding 17-6 lead with only 1:23 left in the first half when Gillus connected with wide receiver Leonard Hopkins on a seven-yard play-action pass. The Rams looked flat and Norfolk was on a roll.

However, behind the leadership of Winbush, WSSU refused to give in. Employing a two-minute offense, Winbush drove the Rams to the Spartan 5. The Rams came away empty-handed, however, as the first half ended before the WSSU field goal team could strike the field.

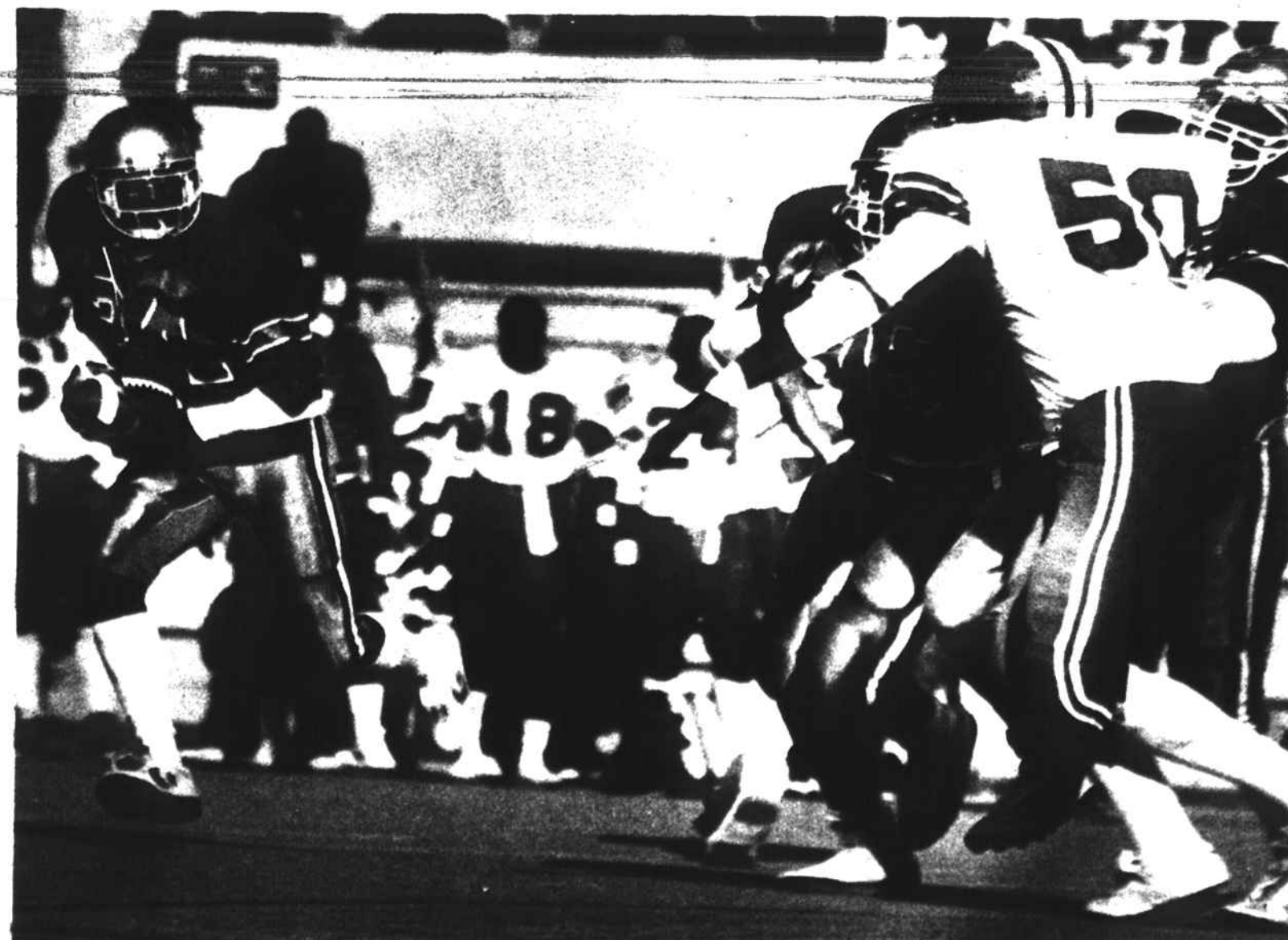
But they did gain confidence. "We really began to gain momentum right before the half," said Warren. "It was important for us to move the ball and we did. That helped us in the second half."

Following intermission, the Rams took control of the game, moving the ball well on their first possession and pinning the Spartans on their own 3-yard line on Vincent Jones' 35-yard, coffin-corner punt.

When Norfolk was forced to punt from its own 21, Warren managed to sneak through and partially block Browder's kick, giving the Rams the ball on the Norfolk 38.

Five plays later, Winbush hit Robert Simmons on an eighty-yard touchdown strike. Smith's P.A.T. made the score 17-13.

The fired-up Ram defense then held Norfolk on four downs and gave the offense the ball on the Please see page B6



William Wright of Norfolk State looks for running room against Winston-Salem. Ram defensive end Mike Warren wards off two Spartan defenders to help stop Wright (photo by James Parker).

PEPSI PREP ATHLETE OF THE WEEK



THE Pepsi Cola Bottling Company of Winston-Salem salutes Dedric Barber of East Forsyth High School...He's the Pepsi Prep Athlete of the Week. Barber, a senior quarterback, led East Forsyth to a 14-2 win over Reynolds in the Eagles' season-ending game. Barber tossed a 31-yard pass for a touchdown and scored another himself on a one-yard run.

IN honor of Dedric Barber, the Pepsi Cola Bottling Company will make a cash contribution to the East Forsyth High School Athletic Program. Congratulations, Dedric Barber... the Pepsi Prep Athlete of the Week!

If you would like to nominate a high school athlete for Pepsi-Prep Athlete of the Week, contact Sam Davis at 723-8428 or write him at P.O. Box 3154, Winston-Salem, N.C. 27102.

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