

To the hoops

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Swingman Ernie Griffin is the top guy for the Vikes, averaging 23.7 points a night as the league's No. 2 scorer behind Union's Davis.

Norfolk State doesn't possess the size inside that they have become accustomed to in past seasons. But that's not ample enough reason to count them out of the conference title chase. The Spartans (7-1) have a seasoned mentor in coach Charles Christian, who is noted for getting every last ounce of productivity from his teams.

NSU isn't shooting that well from the field (44 percent), but neither are their opponents. The Spartans have clamped down on the opposition, holding them to 40 percent field goal shooting.

One strange thing about Christian's team on offense, is that they're better the farther away they get from the basket. As a team, they've hit 49 percent of their three-point goals (43 of 88) and they have a pair of shooters who can put any team in misery from long distance.

James Walker has been hot from the outside, making 56 percent of his threes (18 of 32), while Guy Faunteroy has been almost as deadly, shooting 48 percent from long distance (11 of 23).



Staff Photo

Jackson State Coach John Prince is hoping that his Tigers are ready to challenge in the SWAC.

The Hampton Pirates (6-1) are a well coached and very polished group. Coach Zeke Avery has been able to instill a level of confidence in his players that's very evident each time they play.

They excel in the rebounding department, grabbing a team average of 46.3 a game, while limiting opponents to 34.3 per contest. Freshman post player Keith Hunter has

enjoyed a very good start as a force coming off the bench. He leads the league in field goal percentage (.66), hitting 27 of 41 shots in seven games.

Defending conference champ Virginia State is playing well. But you get the feeling that they haven't hit full stride yet. Over the course of seven games the Trojans (5-2) are being outscored by the opposition, 79-77.

But that's somewhat deceiving, for it's highly likely that they will be in top form in the coming weeks. Leonard Harris leads the offense with 22.8 ppg and he rebounds at a 10.6 per game rate. Everett Watkins lends a considerable amount of offensive support with 16.5 ppg.

St. Paul's and Bowie State are at the bottom of the division ladder. They're going to have some hard times in '89. After the first half of the season, the Tigers were 1-6 (their only win coming against Winston-Salem State) and the Bulldogs posted a 1-7 mark.

In the Southern Division, North Carolina Central is imposing their style on the opposition. They won't run the floor with abandon, but they will take the break if it's there.

Some may call coach Mike Bernard's team the Sominex crew, because of their deliberate, controlled approach to the game. But the method works. The Eagles score only 64 points a game on the average, but opponents find it difficult to get points against NCCU's defense. Going into January, Central's foes have averaged just 51.4 ppg.

The Eagles will have to keep that up in order to mask one of their major deficiencies -- free throw shooting. NCCU is off in that area, shooting 58 percent as a group.

The top guns for Central's offense are Derrick Leake and Antoine Sifford. Both are shooting better than 55 percent from the field and Adrian McKinnon is bullish on the glass with 10.2 rebounds a game.

St. Augustine's has played better than their 6-5 record shows. They were involved in several games that they lost by five points or less. It seems that things haven't come full circle for the Falcons yet. If they are to improve, they'll need to show some consistency as the remainder of the season progresses. The good thing is that they have the time to put everything together.

Lashan McDaniel is the Falcons' leader, averaging 19.5 points per game.

Based on November and December, it appears that Winston-Salem State coach Clarence "Bighouse" Gaines will have a true fight to earn his 800th career win as a college head coach. Gaines is the college game's winningest active coach with 787 wins.

The Rams (2-4) have been victimized by inconsistent play in the paint. Their post players have tended to get into early foul trouble, leaving the team with no adequate defense to stop the opposition's inside players.

Black College Basketball Standings

SIAC

As of Jan. 3

Eastern Region

	Conference	Overall
Paine College*	3-0	8-2
Savannah State*	0-0	3-7
Clark/Atlanta University	0-0	2-8
Albany State	0-1	6-5
Morris Brown	0-1	2-4
Ft. Valley State	0-1	2-7

Western Region

	Conference	Overall
Alabama A & M	5-0	8-1
Morehouse College	3-0	8-1
LeMoyne-Owen	2-1	5-2
Lane College*	1-3	2-11
Tuskegee University	1-4	1-8
Knoxville College	0-2	2-8
Miles College*	0-2	0-9

* Indicates that teams are not eligible for the SIAC conference championship or SIAC/NCAA post-season competition.

SWAC

As of Jan. 4

	Conference	Overall
Southern University	0-0	5-5
Alabama State	0-0	5-5
Jackson State	0-0	4-5
Mississippi Valley State	0-0	4-7
Prairie View A & M	0-0	3-6
Grambling State	0-0	2-8
Texas Southern	0-0	3-7
Alcorn State	0-0	1-10

MEAC

As of Jan. 4

	Conference	Overall
Coppin State	1-0	6-4
South Carolina State	0-0	6-5
Morgan State	0-0	4-6
Howard University	0-0	4-6
Florida A & M	0-0	3-5
Delaware State	0-0	2-6
Bethune-Cookman	0-0	2-7
Maryland/Eastern Shore	0-0	0-9
North Carolina A & T	0-1	2-7

CIAA

As of Dec. 18

Northern Division

	Division	Overall
Virginia Union	1-0	8-0
Norfolk State	1-0	7-1
Hampton	0-0	6-1
Elizabeth City State	0-0	5-2
St. Paul's	0-0	1-6
Virginia State	0-1	5-2
Bowie State	0-1	1-7

Southern Division

	Division	Overall
Winston-Salem State	1-0	2-4
Livingstone College	1-0	3-7
St. Augustine's	0-0	6-5
North Carolina Central	0-0	6-1
Fayetteville State	0-0	4-8
Shaw University	0-1	5-5
Johnson C. Smith	0-1	1-8

Michael Lesane (17.7 ppg) is the fella the Rams go to when they need points and Jamal Pierce (12 points and 10.2 assists per game) has shown signs that he can handle the offense. Charles Swaringer gives the Rams another scoring threat on the perimeter. Swaringer averages 12.7 ppg and has hit 48.5 percent of his three-pointers (16 of 33).

Livingstone College has played well enough to be better than 3-7. The problem has been that they haven't been able to play cohesively for 40 minutes.

The Bears are stocked with experience, but it hasn't produced as well as expected. Three of the losses they suffered could just have easily been victories.

Point guard Cassius Coleman is the heart of the squad. The Liberian connection which consists of Abo Williams, Peter Kpan, and Lucinee Kaba have all given the Bears a needed lift at both ends of the floor.

The Broncos from Fayetteville State have two major problems. They give up too many points (89.9 a game) and they are being dusted off in the rebounding phase of the game (opponents are winning the battle on the glass by 45.2 to 33.2).

FSU has the ability to put up the points (81.5 ppg as a team). Guard Darrell Harris the offensive mainstay with 20 points a game.

But until they tighten up on their "d", they will stay below .500.

Johnson C. Smith (1-8) might as well be lodged at the bottom of an ocean somewhere. Their performance has been that low. They are restructuring and rebuilding. In the meantime, however, guard-forward Walter Hurd does what he can for the Bulls as the CIAA's No. 3 scorer at 23.3 ppg.

-Cyrus Monroe