

# Winston-Salem keeps on rollin'

Life at the top can be very lonely.

Just ask coach Pete Richardson and his Winston-Salem State Rams. They know the feeling well.

How come?

All they've been doing is winning. At midseason, they were 5-0 and have been the No. 1 ranked black college team (Sheridan Poll, National Black Network Poll) since mid-September. They were ranked sixth in the Division II polls.

"It's good for the school that we have that ranking," Richardson says. "But our primary purpose is to win the conference championship and then get to the playoffs."

The Rams are the two-time CIAA champions who are working their way towards a third straight league title. You'd think that would be enough to satisfy the most critical fan.

But in some people's minds, that's not good enough.

There are voices of discontent among Rams' followers. They point out that Winston has a soft schedule this year. They will tell you that even though WSSU has been winning, they haven't been overpowering in popping their undermanned opposition.

For Richardson, dealing with such talk is just part of the territory that comes with being the head grid master at Winston-Salem State.

"We've had a winning tradition for quite a few years," Richardson says. "When you win consistently, people always expect nothing but the best. But what many folk forget, is that when teams play us, it's a big game for them and they really get up for us."

Last season WSSU finished the regular season at 10-1 and made the Division II playoffs in Richardson's first year as head coach. Before that, when Bill Hayes

(North Carolina A & T coach) was the head man, the Rams compiled a 90-42-2 record and bagged three CIAA championship trophies along the way.

At this juncture, though, it appears that the Rams have been too tough, and too good, for too long. And it shows in their '89 schedule.

By most standards, Winston has one of their weakest schedules in several years. That's because none of the top CIAA teams seem to have an avid interest in facing them during the regular season. With the exception of Bowie State, no contending team in the CIAA North appears on WSSU's schedule. And according to reports around the league, teams are ducking the Rams.

Why?

Primarily because Winston has a way of beating you physically and mentally. The rationale appears to be that if you have to face them, it would be better to do it in a post-season setting. At least that way, some observers say, you don't have to worry about going into the next game of your regular season with a lot of key people residing in hospital wards.

Richardson discards such notions. He says that the schedule for '89 is a product of other schools pulling out for other reasons and that Winston wasn't able to replace those schools with the quality of opponents that they usually play.

When you take a look at who the Rams have faced so far this year, you may give credence to the idea that Winston hasn't played a team that has anywhere near the same level of talent that they do, man for man.

After all (and this isn't intended as a put down), but Knoxville, A & T, Elizabeth City, Livingstone, and Fayetteville State aren't exactly the most formidable teams in the CIAA or Division II these

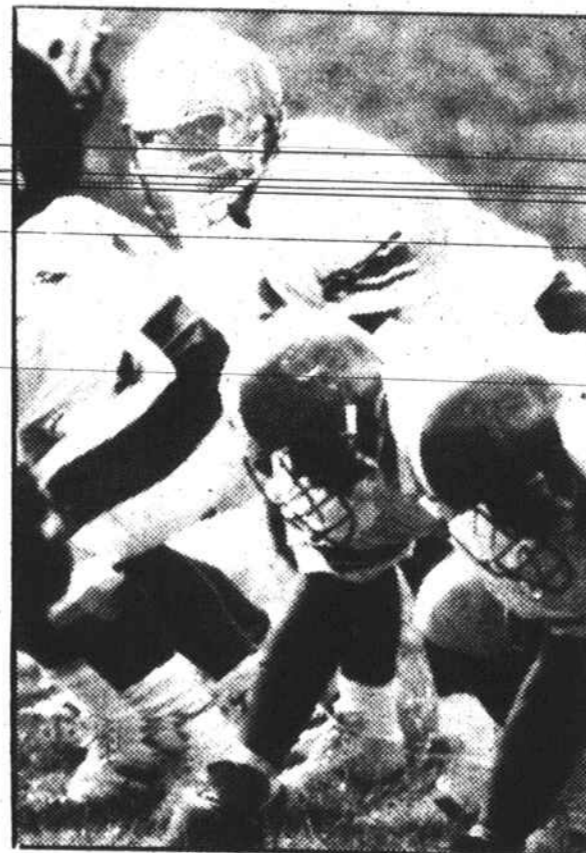


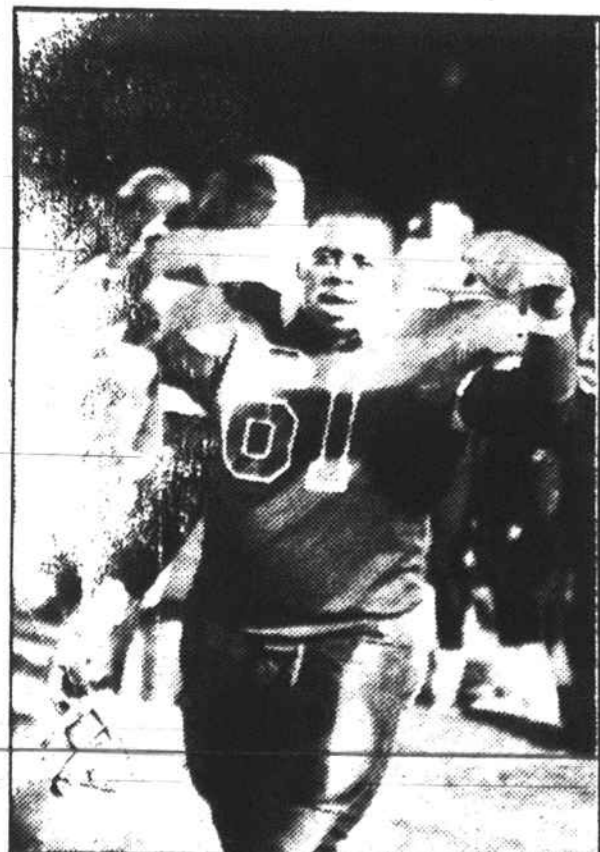
Photo by Max Dunhill

**Kenny Jones has become the offensive leader for the Rams. His ability to call the right audibles have made him a more effective quarterback.**

days. Deeper still, the Rams did have problems exerting their dominance in those games, with the exception of the Aggies (a 48-19 mauling) and Fayetteville State (a 34-6 drubbing).

But while Winston's schedule hasn't been as strong as it has been in the past, Richardson doesn't view that as being detrimental. His team, when healthy, is among the best in the nation. But depth, or the lack of it on both sides of the football, has been his major concern since pre-season practice started in August.

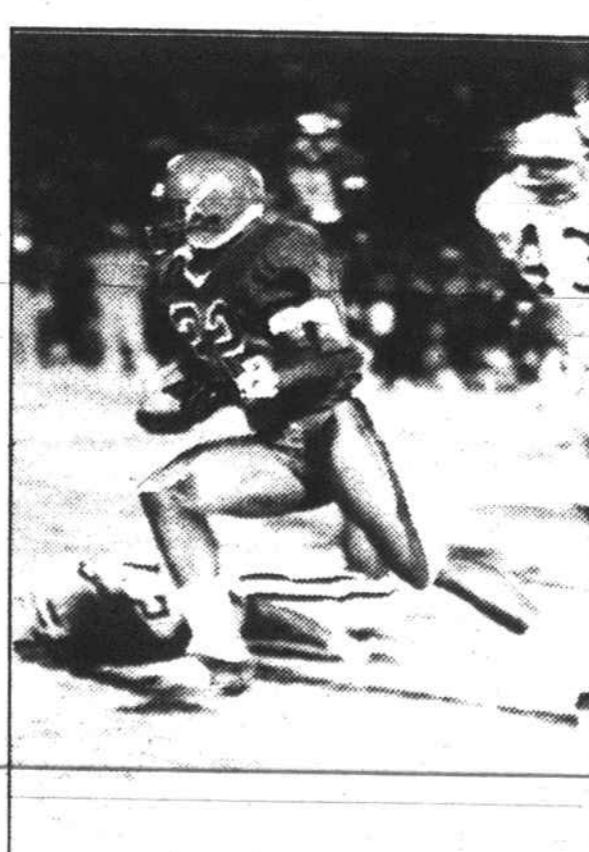
"I think the schedule has worked to our advantage," the coach points out. "We've had some injuries, so we've had to play some youngsters in order to replace



Clayton Suggs



Donald Frank



Broderick Graves

