

Sports

B5

BASKETBALL FEVER

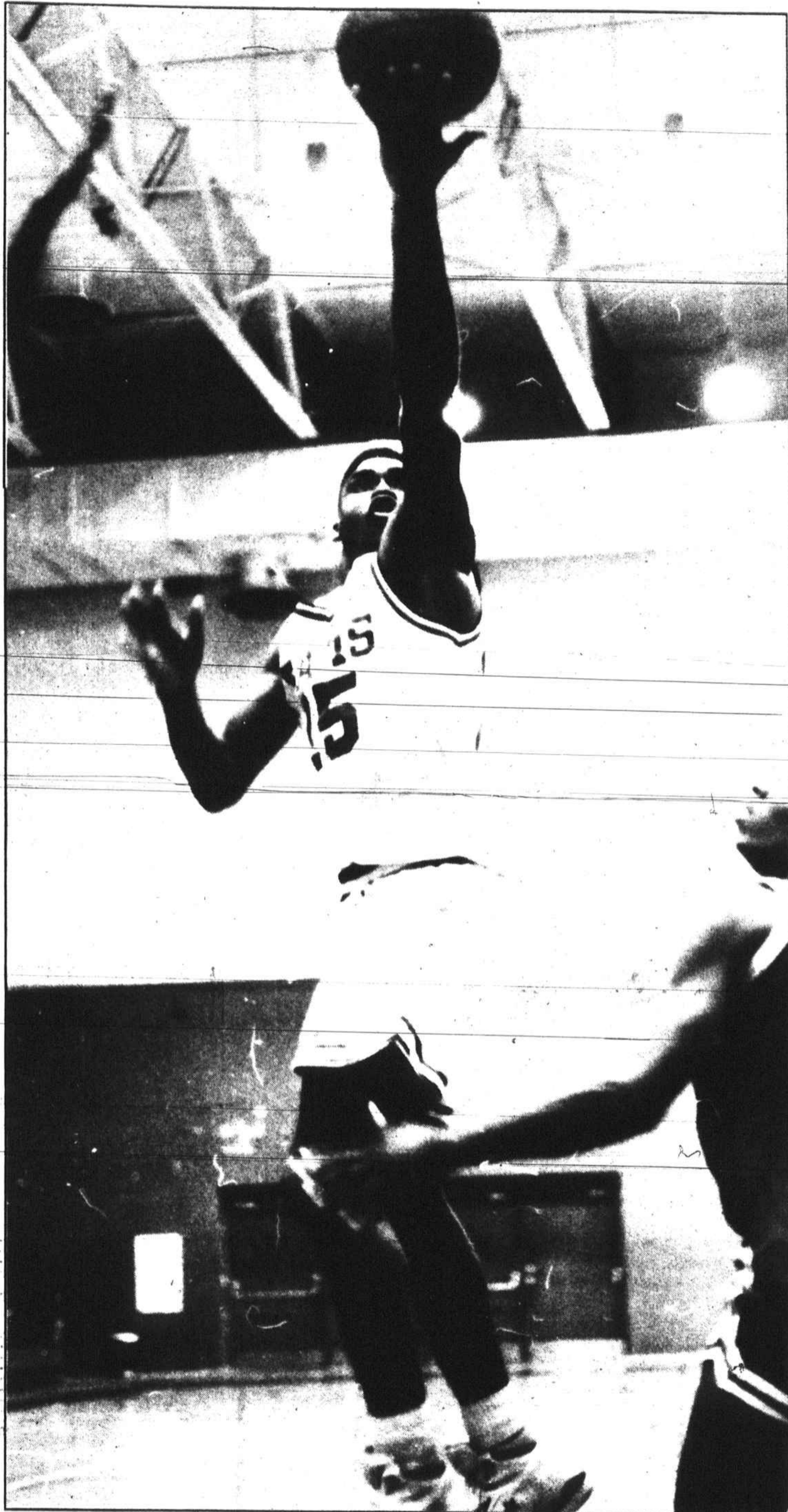


Photo by T-Lee

William Antrum soars skyward for two of his 17 points against Paine last Saturday night.

Are the Rams legitimate title contenders this time around?

By CRAIG T. GREENLEE
Chronicle Sports Editor

The basketball season is still young and Winston-Salem State is over the .500 mark. But that's hardly a major surprise.

However, the next few days should provide plenty of answers as to whether or not the Rams will be legitimate contenders in the CIAA this winter.

Based on Winston's two convincing wins in last weekend's Thanksgiving Classic (71-61 over Bowie State and 81-50 vs. Paine College), it appears that WSSU has the necessary pieces to make a serious run at the top spot.

Rams' coach Clarence "Big-house" Gaines, however, isn't ready to admit outright that his present team is championship

material.

"Our defense has improved," Gaines said. "But that's hard to measure because the teams we play over the next week will be much stronger than the ones we played last weekend. Those teams will be physically bigger, so we'll have to outquick them and play consistent defense."

The next few days will provide the Rams with an early season acid test. They hosted Virginia Union last night and will travel to play Norfolk State on Saturday. The four game swing ends next Thursday with a road game vs. St. Paul's.

"Those games will tell us a lot," Gaines admits. "In that time frame, we play the strongest teams in the Northern Division. It won't get any tougher. I'd like

to finish in front and even win all four games. But it's quite possible that we could win three of the four."

The chances of the Rams coming out on top in that four game set depends on how much group help they get at both ends of the floor. In the Classic, it was refreshing to discover that power forward Jonathan Hardin (21.3 ppg, 8.3 rpg) won't always have to be the one guy to carry the offensive load all by himself.

In the championship vs. Paine, for example, Hardin was the lead man with 18 points, but William Antrum came off the bench to fire in 17 points. In the meantime, James Doggett (12 points) and Vernon Redmond (10 points) came through with timely contributions of their own.

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Black college challenge set for weekend tip-off

By Chronicle Staff

College roundball takes center stage tomorrow and Saturday with the first annual Black College Basketball Challenge at the Greensboro Coliseum.

The challenge will provide fans with an early season view of some of the top teams in the black college ranks. The two-day affair features teams representing each of the four historically black college athletic conferences — Southwestern Athletic Conference, Mid-Eastern Athletic Conference, Southern Intercollegiate Athletic Conference, and Central Intercollegiate Athletic Association.

The Black College Basketball Challenge is being produced by Focus Marketing, the company that also produces *Black College Sports Today*, a weekly television show that appears on ESPN.

Round I

First round action begins tomorrow with a 7 p.m. game pitting Albany State against North Carolina Central.

Albany won the SIAC's Eastern Region last year and made it to the finals of the SIAC Tournament, where they lost to Morehouse College, a team that made it to Division II's Elite Eight. Central won the CIAA Southern Division title last season and made it to the first round of the Division II regionals. The Eagles won the Division II title in '89.

In the 9 p.m. nightcap, Mississippi Valley State will square-off against home favorite, North Carolina A&T in a Division I match-up.

Valley State is picked by many observers to win the SWAC this season after ending last year with a 7-7 league mark. A&T, in the meantime, is poised to continue their climb back to MEAC prominence after barely losing to league champ Coppin State in the conference tournament finals last March.

On Saturday, the teams will change opponents for the final night of action. At 7 p.m., Albany tips off against Mississippi Valley State, while A&T and Central renew their in-state rivalry at 9 p.m.

Team profiles

Here's a capsulized look at the teams who will compete in the Black College Basketball Challenge.

• North Carolina A&T — The once dominant Aggies hit the skids in recent years after ruling the MEAC roost last decade.

But it now appears that the Aggies are back to reclaim their former glory. Everybody that played on last year's surprising tournament team is back and ready to prove that last March was no fluke.

Dana Elliot and Colin Spady are very dependable performers in the paint. But 6-9 pivotman Chris Johnson has shown that he is likely to be a presence for A&T during the '90-'91 campaign.

All-star performer Glenn Taggart returns to his natural position at shooting guard after playing the point last year. Winston Williams is slated to replace Taggart as the Aggies' trigger

book on fire last season, averaging 29.9 ppg to lead the SWAC and finish as the NCAA's top freshman scorer.

Ford gets plenty of help from William Townsend and Derrick Harvey who collectively averaged 25.9 ppg last season.

• North Carolina Central — It seems that the Eagles will be a mystery team because they have so many new faces on the roster this time.

But while the faces may be new, coach Michael Bernard's game plan won't change — meaning precision offensive patterns that use most of the shot clock and suffocating defense designed to cause opposing offenses to break down.

Two transfers could hold the key for Central. Point guard Terrell Knight (East Carolina) and center Brent Williams (Furman) are primed to help the Eagles soar in the CIAA.

• Albany State — The Rams aren't experienced as they have been in recent seasons. But that doesn't mean they will be pushovers.

ASC was 2-0 as *Chronicle Sports* went to press. Four of their starting five average in double figures scoring. Scott Jackson is the Rams top gun at 20.5 ppg and center Reuben Harvey has developed into a consistent shot blocker.

A Challenging Field

TOMORROW
7 p.m.

Albany State
vs.
North Carolina Central
9 p.m.
Mississippi Valley State
vs.
North Carolina A&T

SATURDAY
7 p.m.

Albany State
vs.
Mississippi Valley State
9 p.m.
North Carolina Central
vs.
North Carolina A&T

For ticket information, call Focus Marketing (919/230-1996) or the Greensboro Coliseum (919/373-7400).

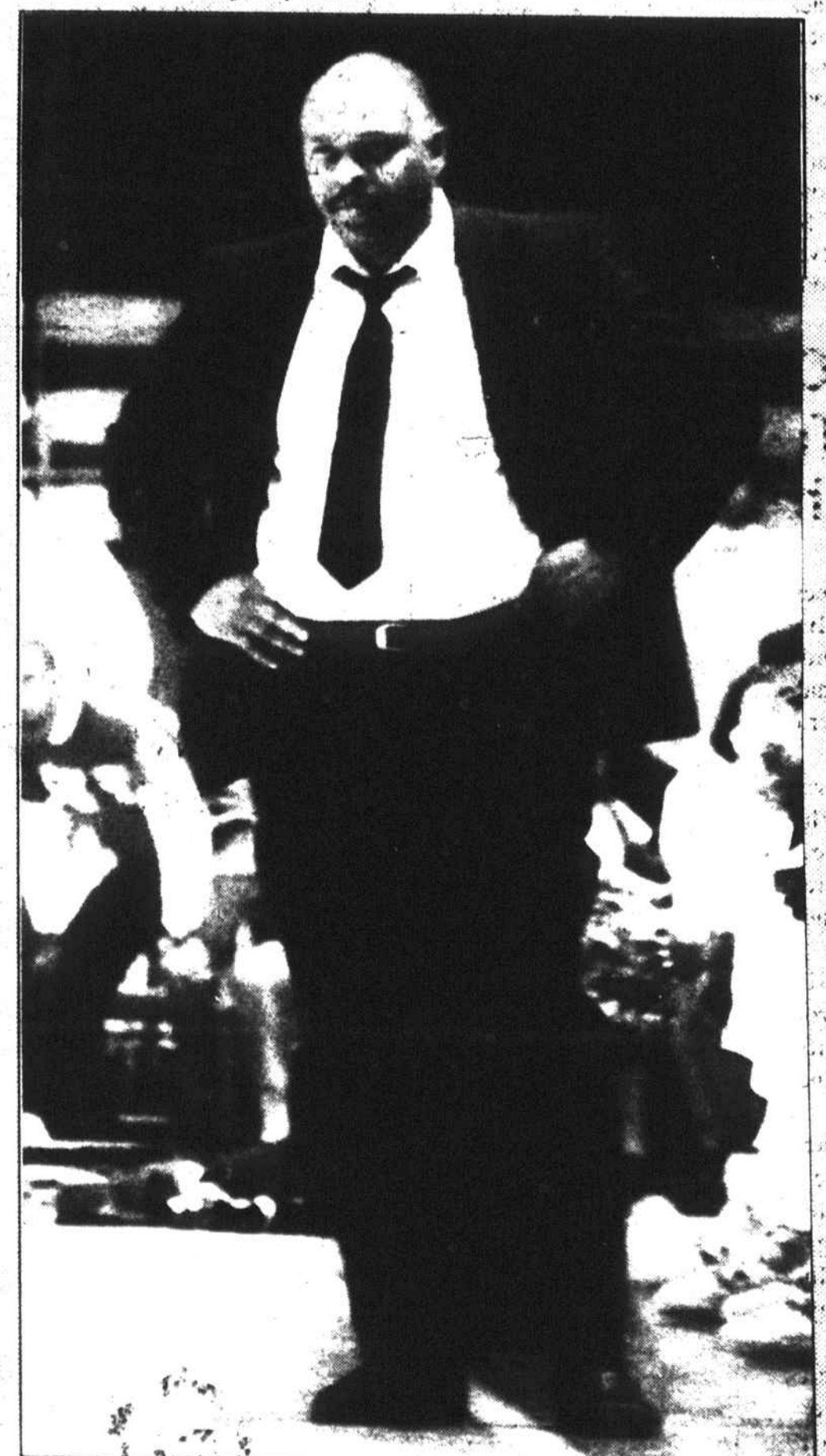


Photo by Max Dunhill

A&T coach Don Corbett will have his team primed to make a strong run in the MEAC title chase this season.