

Spencer Classic

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Photo by T-Lee

Casey Simmons didn't score a lot of points in the finals. But his versatility as a ball handler, rebounder and defender was instrumental in the Vikings' fourth quarter surge.

The Jackets didn't exactly shackle Foster. But they did prevent him from being as integral a factor as he normally is.

As a result, Poe's guys were able to keep North's Rommie Crowell from thoroughly dominating whenever he posted up in the paint.

Crowell, the tournament MVP, finished with 24 points. But there were times when the Jackets' defense made it difficult for the Vikes to get the ball to him.

Carver's pressure not only cut off the passing lanes to Crowell, but created spacing problems for North's offense. Improper spacing, as much as anything, enabled an ultra-quick Carver team to get steals or deflect a lot of passes.

When you combine that with the Jackets' ability to contest every in-bounds pass, you understand why North committed a dozen turnovers in the second half.

The Vikings, on the other hand, had their moments. And with the exception of a couple of late game, open-court situations that didn't pan out, coach Sonny Butler's team may have emerged victorious as expected.

For all of its individual talent, North is a relatively young team that is still learning to play as a unit — consistently — especially when it comes to getting the ball to Crowell. Added game experience will take care of that.

The Vikings have a reputation for putting points on the board. But these guys are nowhere near shabby at the defensive end. Had it not been for their half-court man-to-man pressure, North would not have staged a furious comeback after falling behind by as many as nine points early in the fourth quarter.

North will become more formidable as the season progresses, particularly on the boards thanks to Curtis Coleman, Crowell and Simmons. There won't be many teams that can handle the Vikings on the glass in '92.

Carver, however, will also improve. That's because they understand what it takes to get the maximum out of what they have. They're noted for defense. But their offense shouldn't be scoffed at.

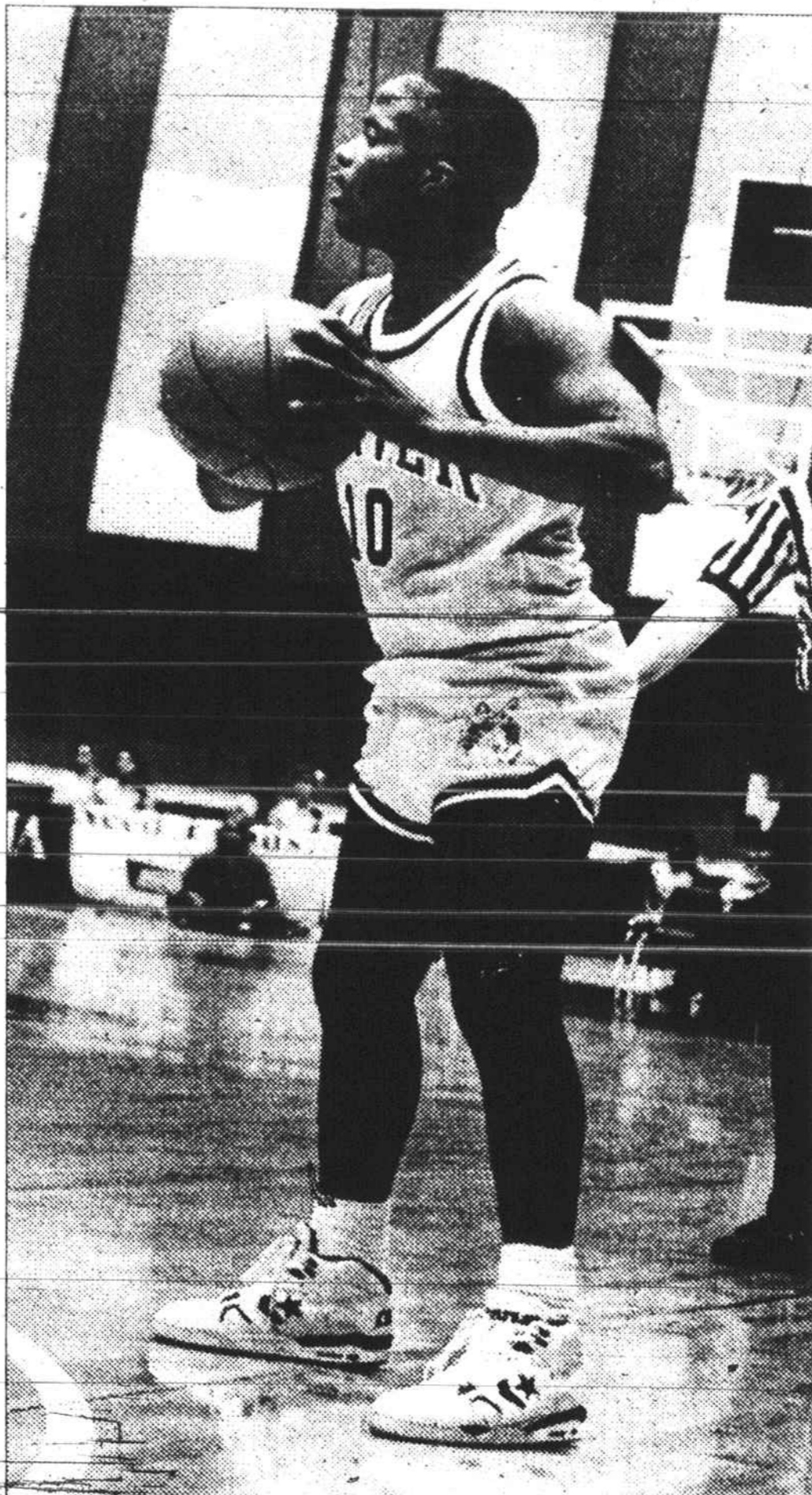


Photo by Max Dunhill

Daren Hart, last year's tournament MVP, lifted the Jackets to the title when he scored what proved to be the winning basket with less than 20 seconds remaining in the game.

In the finals, David Hart and Eric Johnson shouldered the offensive load. Hart was especially lethal, scoring nine of his team-high 15 points in the second half to help keep the Vikes at a distance. Johnson, a quick leaper who has a deadly accurate medium-range jumper, contributed 12 points to the cause.

But in the end, it was Daren Hart who came through with what proved to be the game-winner for Carver. With less than 17 seconds left to play and his team leading by a basket (54-52), Hart took a long pass against the press and sliced past Crowell for a driving layup. He also drew the foul

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which sent Crowell to the bench with his fifth personal foul.

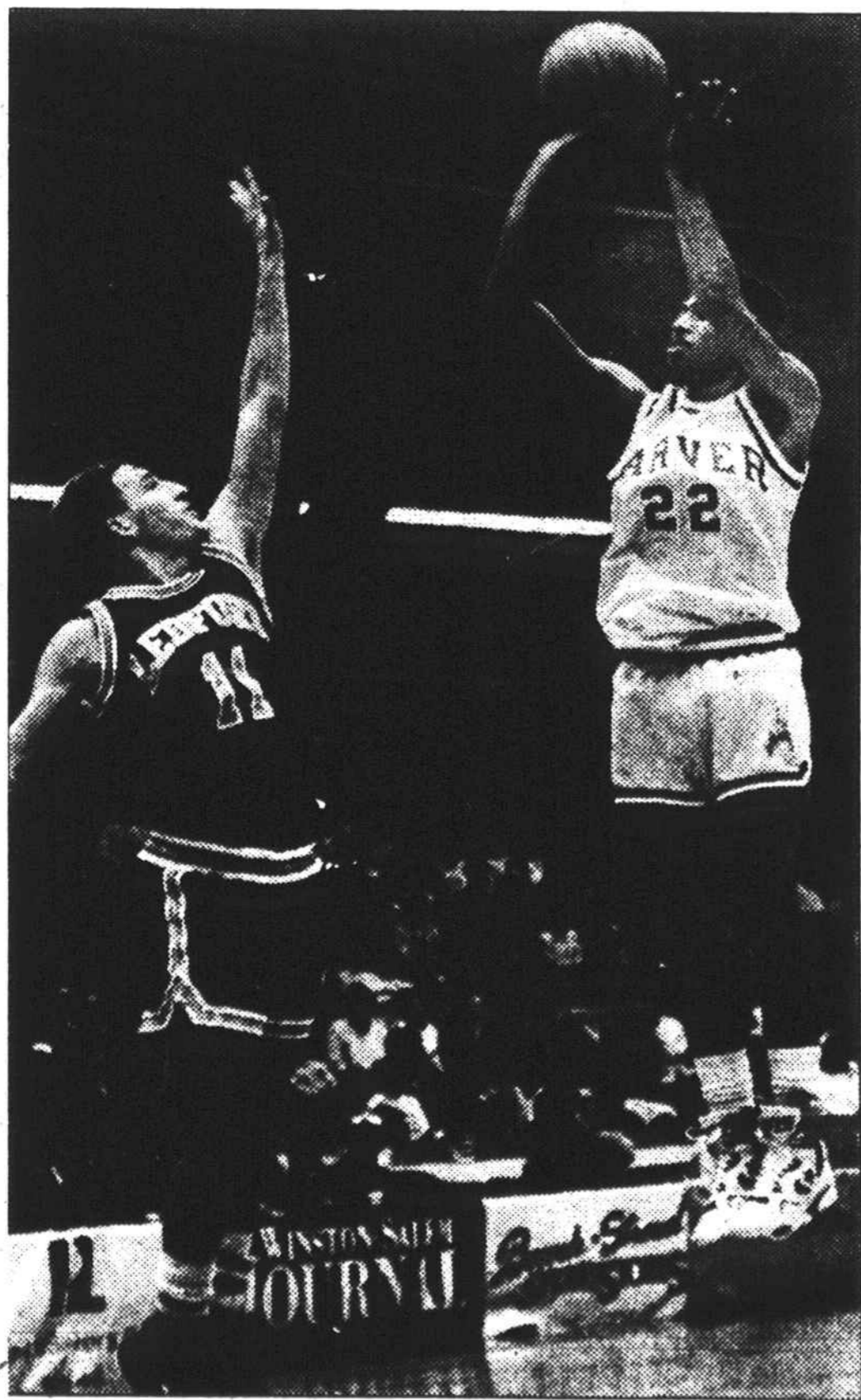


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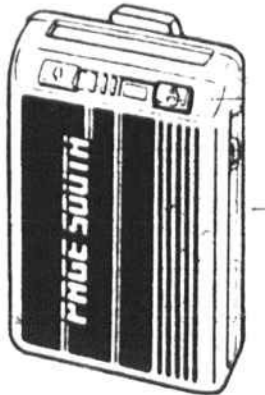
Eric Johnson's jump shooting played a key role in Carver's quest to win their second consecutive Spencer championship.

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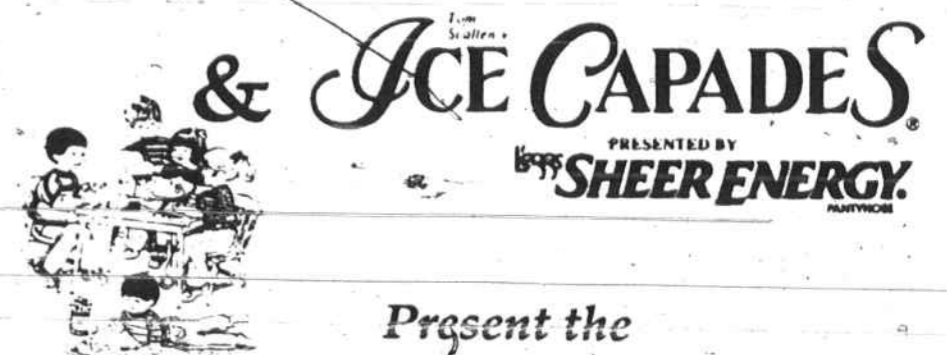
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