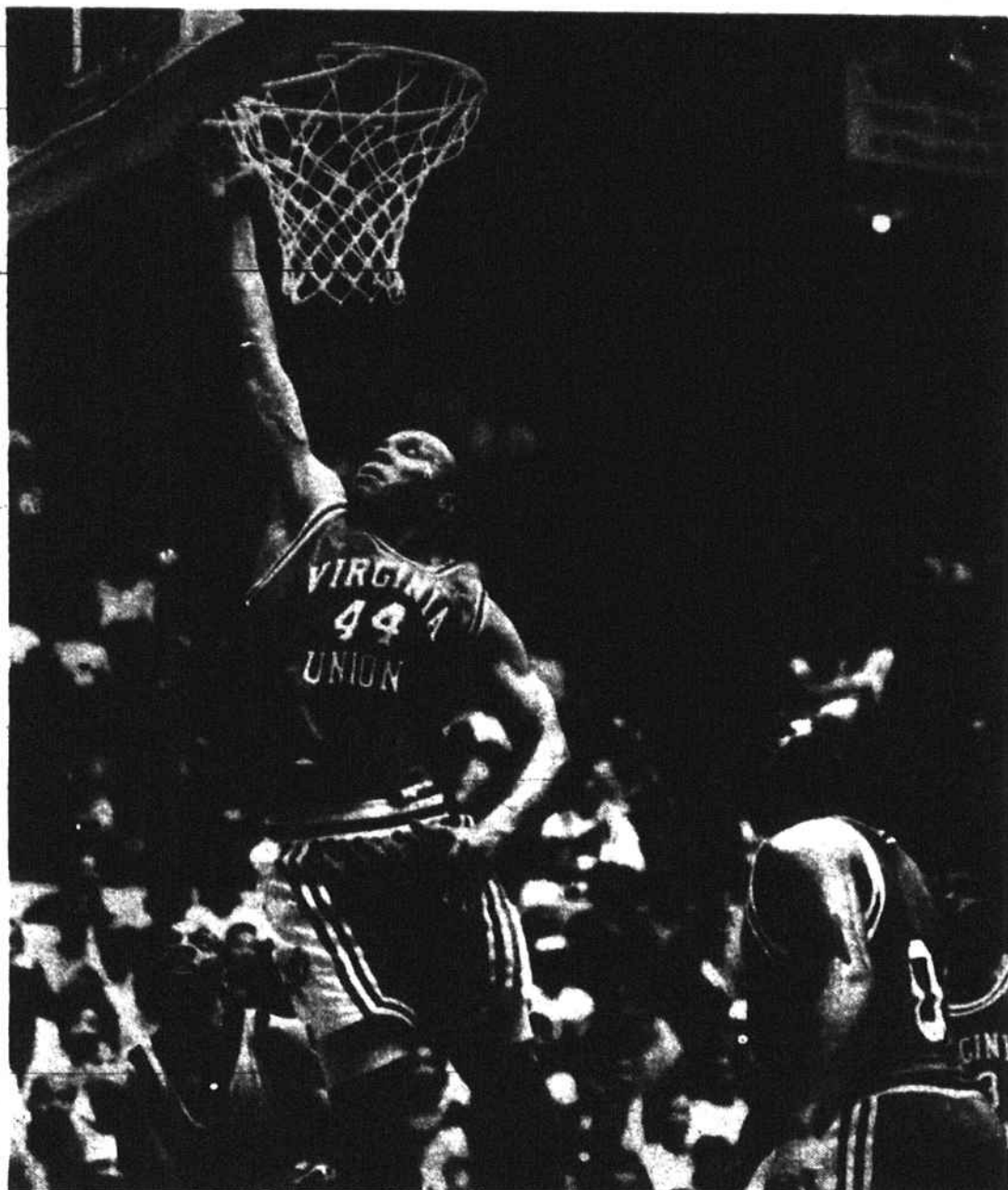
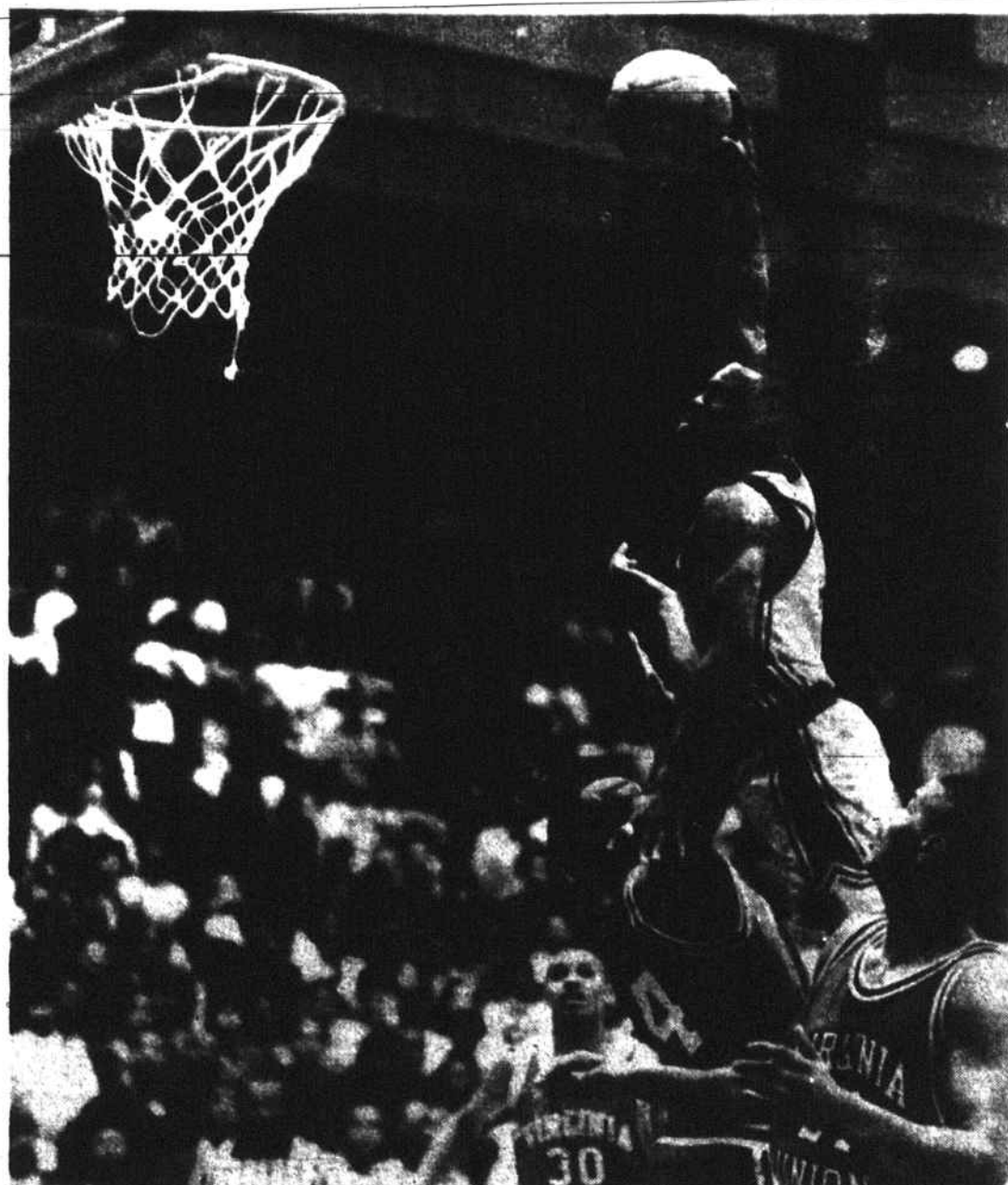


COVER STORY



Tim Davis, 6'8", Jr. should help Va. Union in its quest for another CIAA title.



N.C. Central Eagle, Clifton Daye, along with Walker will make them a force to be reckoned with.

N.C. Central Could Topple Va. Union

In the preseason, Johnson C. Smith coach Steve Joyner said it: the CIAA was going to be more balanced than ever this season.

Well, as we head into the 48th annual CIAA Tournament Feb. 24-27 at the Richmond Coliseum, which is the final go 'round for the CIAA in the Virginian city, Joyner's preseason prediction has turned out to be very, very true.

This year's men's tournament is, in the words of Livingstone coach Stan Lewter, a toss-up.

"I think the tournament will be interesting affair," Lewter said. "Going in it looks like there are five teams who should be considered favorites. You've got three Southern Division teams in North Carolina Central, Fayetteville State and Johnson C. Smith and two from the Northern Division in Elizabeth City and Virginia Union."

For once, many observers really think that a Southern Division team could win it all this year. It's been 14 years since the last Southern Division team won, Bighouse Gaines' Winston-Salem State team, though J.C. Smith made the tournament final a year ago. And with the tournament moving south to Winston-Salem, N.C., next year, Lewter feels that this would be a good year to start a trend.

"This would be a great sequeway to having the tournament in the south next year," Lewter said, "to have a southern team win it, especially if it's from Salisbury."

Salisbury is where Lewter's Livingstone team is located. And for the Blue Bears to win, it would take a few upsets. For the week ending Feb. 7, Livingstone was 4-13 and next to last in the CIAA's Southern Division.

But for the other three Southern Division teams, winning this year's

Panthers vs Eagles

championship is a definite possibility. All of this brings us to:

THE FAVORITES:

VIRGINIA UNION

OK, this is a year of parity, but let's not be stupid. To not go with Virginia Union, the defending Division II

National Champion, as the favorite would be like going into the desert without a few bottles of water. In 14 years at the school, Union coach Dave Robbins has won six of these CIAA championships.

And as of Feb. 7, the Panthers (17-2) were the only CIAA team to not lose to a conference opponent and were at their usual station- first-place