

**SWAC WOMEN**

# Mississippi Valley: Underdogs Win Big, beat Southern For SWAC Title

## SWAC Smallest School May Close its Doors this Fall

Mississippi Valley has always had to battle the odds for its very survival.

Valley's women basketball team entered the Southwestern Athletic Conference as a big underdog. The Delta Devilettes were only expected to last one game in the tournament.

Surprise.

Valley, the smallest school in the

the campus.

"Didn't too many people give us much of a chance," Harris said.

"This demonstrates that our young people can rise to a higher level," Valley president Dr. William Sutton said. "This does a lot for our morale for our students. It is great winning this under those type of circumstances. We want to send a message to everybody that Valley is a

*"We came in here with a positive attitude, We wanted to take Southern out of its game so we could have a chance to win."*

—Donna White

Southwestern Athletic Conference, won the league's biggest prize.

Valley, a school that has always battled large odds, didn't let being sixth-seeded bother it in a 72-68 victory over top-seeded Southern in the SWAC tournament championship.

Donna White, named the tournament's most valuable player, scored 28 points and grabbed 11 rebounds in leading Valley to its first conference championship since the 1986-87 season.

"We came in here with a positive attitude," White said. "We wanted to take Southern out of its game so we could have a chance to win."

Although White carried the Devilettes the majority of the game, she got help from Vanessa Harris and Demetriss Brown. Harris finished with 14 points and Brown added 10.

"Donna deserved the MVP award," Harris said. "She showed out, baby."

Winning the championship stretches beyond the basketball court for Valley, a 2,200 student college located in the Mississippi Delta.

In October the Mississippi State College Board has proposed to close the school.

Valley coach Jesse Harris said the win should boost morale around

competitive school."

Southern got the message loud and clear.

Valley trailed 55-54 with 8:39 to play, but White's layup with 7:54 gave the Devilettes the lead for good at 56-55.

"Coming into the arena we heard the Southern players say we were no competition," White said. "Coming in the sixth-seeded and beating the No. 1 seed is great. We were the underdogs."

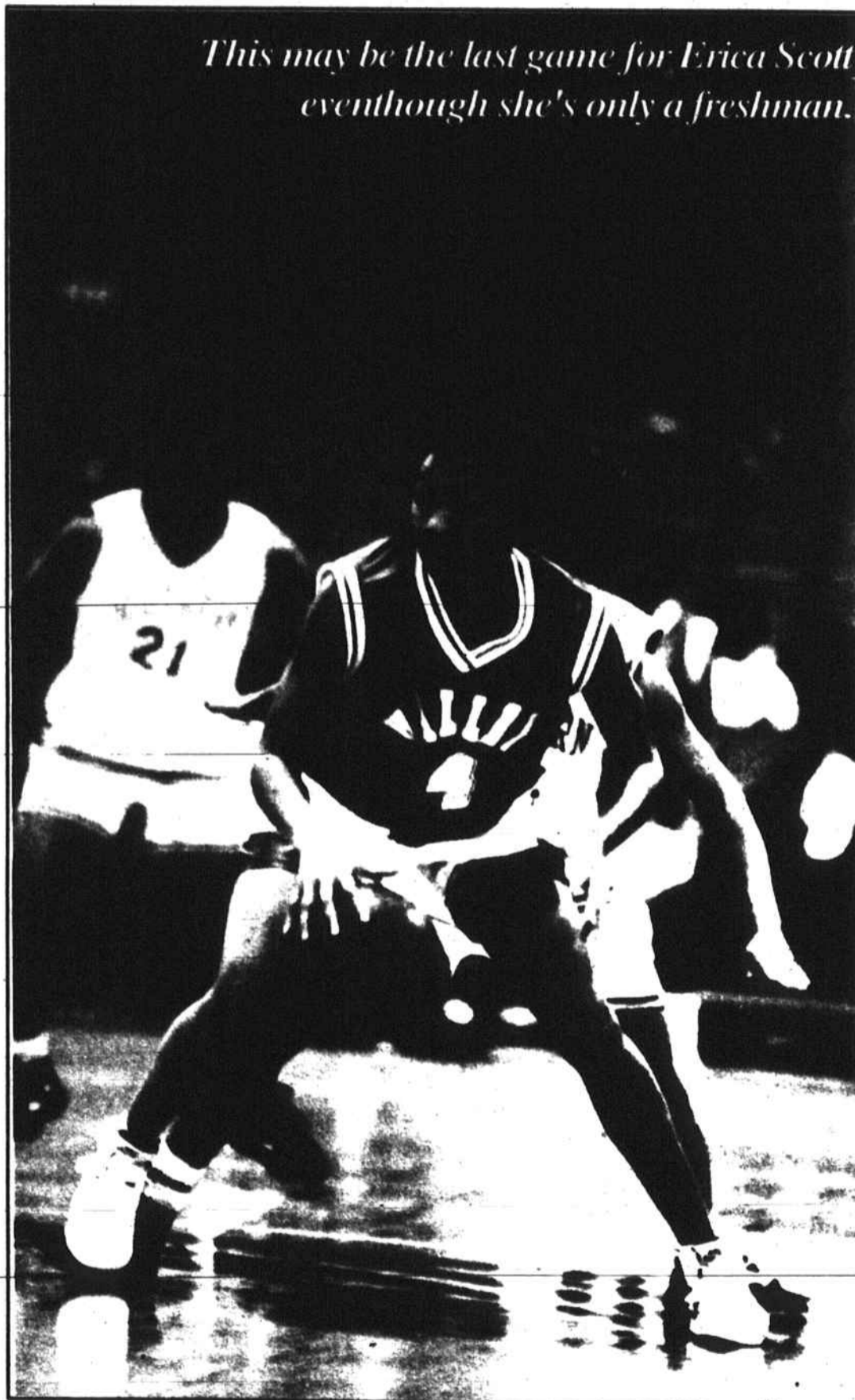
Since the SWAC didn't have an automatic bid for women's basketball, Valley ended its season at 11-17 record. Southern, the regular season co-champion with Alcorn State, ended its season 20-7 under first-year coach Herman Hartman.

"They outplayed us," said Hartman, who was a highly successful boys high school basketball coach before taking the Southern job. "We were a little nervous and made some mistakes at some crucial times."

Valley had a 34-24 lead at half-time, but Southern made an earlier second half run to tie the game at 40-40 with 14:30 remaining.

"We kept saying this game is not over," Harris said.

Upstart Valley reached the finals



*This may be the last game for Erica Scott even though she's only a freshman.*

after knocking off Texas Southern 74-63 in the semifinals. The Lady Devilettes beat Grambling State 64-56 in the first round.

Harris can't take full credit for his team's march through the SWAC tournament.

Texas Southern was coming off a big 90-88 overtime win over two-

time defending champion Alcorn State the day before in the semifinals.

"I listen to players, but the final decision is always mine," said Harris. "I take into consideration what they have to say."

—By Derrick Mahone