

# A Candid Look at Bighouse's Problems at WSSU

Most of the articles on the great Clarence "Bighouse" Gaines tend to provide almost no analysis and overlook several important facts. What is reported is history, albeit great history, about a great basketball coach. However, a closer examination of the "House" would lead to several obvious if not painful questions.

First of all, did the Winston-Salem State community, school or its fans owe Gaines the opportunity to make an attempt to break Kentucky coach Adolph Rupp's record of 875 wins in a career? After all, he only needed 38 more wins to get the record. Last year's Rams team won 6 of 24 games. At that rate, Ram fans would have had to suffer through six more seasons to make history.

The pain of such an attempt would rival the last fights of Muhammed Ali and Joe Louis as they attempted, well past their prime, to recapture lost glory. Indeed, it would only sully the reputation of a great coach.

The reason for his 6-18 season needs to be explained. Gaines pointed out to his—and other black

coaches with the possible exception of Georgetown's John Thompson—to recruit the top high-school players in the country. Although that is correct, the impression left this must be the reason for the losing seasons.

However, since most of most of WSSU's games were against teams that could no longer sign the Earl "The Pearl" Monroe types, they would also appear to be equally disadvantaged. WSSU's program lagged far behind those at N.C. Central and Virginia Union and was no better than those at St. Paul's or Livingstone.

Did Gaines lose because he had less money to recruit players? If so, then the next question is why Athletic Director Clarence Gaines appears to have allocated the funds in such a way that the football coach had enough money to win several CIAA championships, but not enough for the basketball team.

If \$31,000 was the amount of money Gaines had to spend on basketball scholarships and recruiting costs his final season, then the relationship between Gaines and the Winston-Salem community, fans and alumni must be questioned.

Clearly, the ones who profess to love WSSU sent few, if any, dollars to support his program. Apparently, the community saw no need to contribute in any amount close to Wake Forest's.

The lack of financial support

him to supplement his anemic budget.

Perhaps it's time people examined why coaches such as Clarence "Bighouse" Gaines receive so little financial support from the community that claims to love him. And

## GUEST COLUMN

By MICHAEL SIMMONS

by fans, alumni, former players and the black business interest in Winston-Salem ensured Gaines would not have an opportunity to break Rupp's mark. Arguably the greatest black basketball coach of all time could not get the financial support from those who supposedly loved

also why WSSU alumni like to talk about what should be done, but do not contribute to do something about it.

(Michael Simmons is an assistant professor of economics at North Carolina A&T University)



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## Tracey Bobbitt from page B1

tunity to develop her coaching and recruiting skills faster than an established program would.

Something Bobbitt was not counting on this season is actually being a head coach for a short time. During a game against Bowie State, Conley was unable to coach so Bobbitt was pushed into the spotlight immediately.

"After the game, Coach (Thomas) Snowden asked me if I was ready to become a head coach and I told him I wasn't ready yet," Bobbitt said. "He told that was a good sign because if I said yes, I was in a lot of trouble."

While planning to enroll in graduate school this fall, Bobbitt

has taken a step to ensure her coaching career by taking the coaches' certification exam. Among her goals is to become a top assistant coach at a women's program or even for a men's team. But Bobbitt is grateful for the opportunity to start at WSSU.

"Coach Conley gave me a chance to come here and he didn't have to," Bobbitt said, who received her degree in physical education this past spring. "He's going to let me go out recruiting with him and help him bring in some players we think can help build a winning program. I thank him for believing that I can help out this program."

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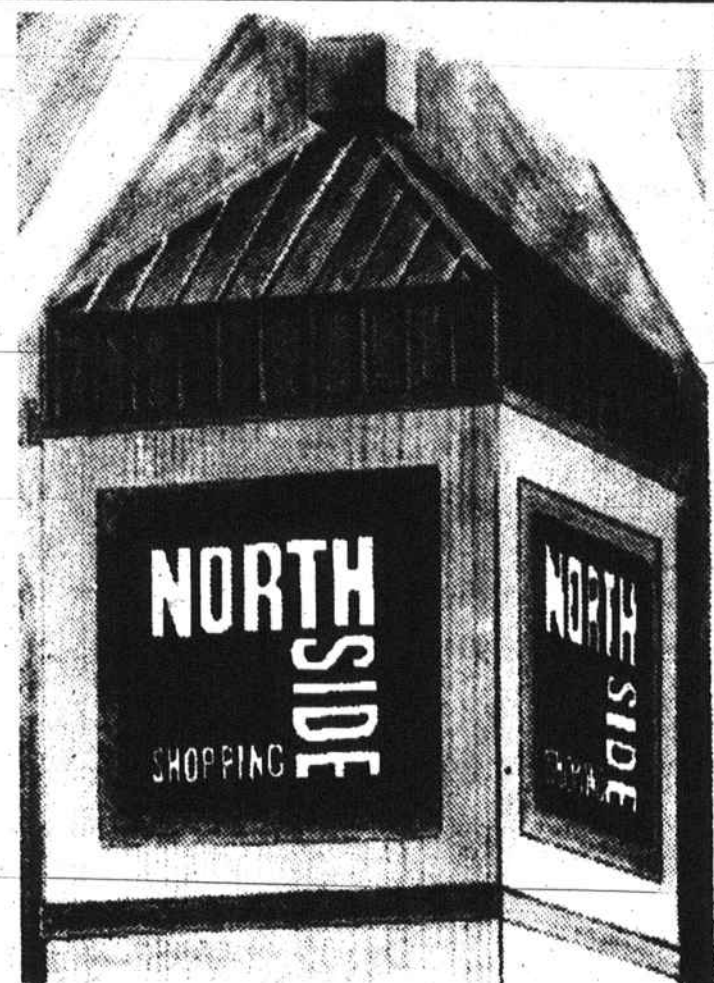
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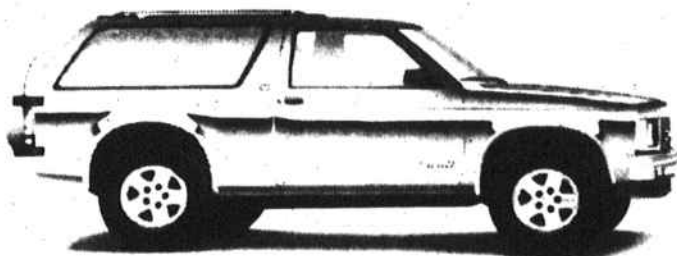
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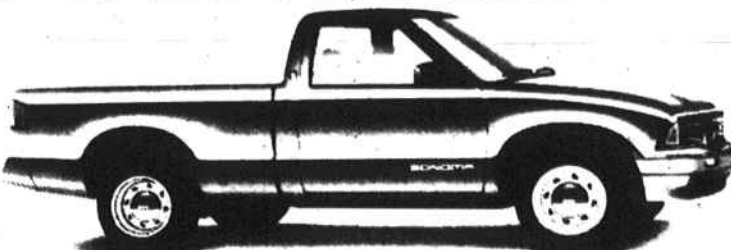
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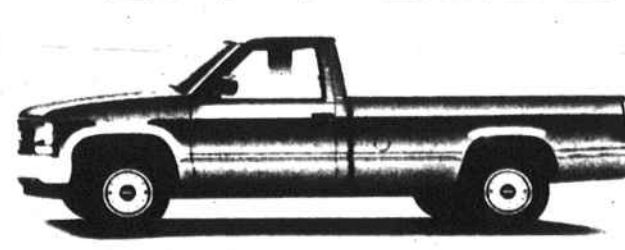


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