

An Honest Man in an Honest Sport

Bill Hayes, N.C. A&T football coach, says he likes football because it's honest. "It's the kind of job that if I give it my all," he says, "I'll get a reward. But if you cheat it, it'll make you cry. It'll humble you." Hayes, 52, is beginning his eighth season as head coach at A&T, a school that gave him his master's degree in 1975. He's been either playing or coaching football for 30 years. He's seen the dollars corrupt the sport and seen how the search for money and television exposure has hurt black colleges' recruiting. How is he supposed to compete with Michigan or North Carolina or Florida State for a talent. The Big White Schools bring money, boosters, television exposure. Hayes? He brings the promise of a good education, family values. Honesty. It's his rule and what he lives by. He believes in hard work and the value gained from it. He says he rarely takes vacation. "I took three days this year," he says, "I guess I have a lot of days built up." During all those days he didn't take vacation, Hayes has done a lot of work. He's been in a lot of student-athletes' homes, trying to convince them to come play for him. He's been in a lot of student-athletes' homes, trying to convince them to come play for him. He's been rewarded for his hard work. Coming out of N.C. Central in 1965, Hayes worked for eight years as a high school coach. In 1973, he became the first black coach in the ACC, being named an offensive backs coach at Wake Forest. Three years later, he moved to Winston-Salem State where he won nine coach of the year awards in 12 seasons and ran up a 89-40-2 record. In 1977 and 1978, the Rams were the top ranked team in NCAA Division II with a combined record of 20-0. In 1983 and '84 and '85 and '86, Winston-Salem State again won CIAA Southern Division titles. By 1987, his last year with the Rams, A&T was looking for a football coach just short of a magician. And Hayes had watched his '82 Rams team go 3-7. But presto, he changed his offense to some wild-looking run-scheme called the Wing-T and went 8-1-1 the next season. Could Hayes be Houdini? A&T officials certainly thought so, stealing their man away from a close rival. Things were bad, too. The Aggie Pride was gone. The Aggies were losing and fans were losing faith. But Hayes was good at this turning around stuff. When he'd arrived at Winston-Salem State, the Rams program was in shambles, with just two winning seasons in 14 years. Compared to that, A&T's not having a win-

ning season in two years seemed like small potatoes. So when Hayes came to Greensboro, expectations were pretty high. But the truth was that A&T had lost most of its veterans from the '87 team to graduation.

Hayes' first team, in 1988, would suffer. And it did, finishing 2-9, the worst record any Hayes team had ever finished with. In 1989, slowly the recovery began. The Aggies finishing 9-2. Hayes was named the Sheridan Broadcasting Group's coach of the year. A&T's not had a losing season since, going a combined 32-17 since 1990. This year's Aggies, featuring quarterback Maseo Bolin, are picked to finish Carolinas Football Classic on Nov. 18 at Charlotte's 25,000-sheet Memorial Stadium (see story, page 3). That game, which will ultimately be moved to the 72,500-seat stadium being constructed in Charlotte for the NFL Carolina Panthers, will be covered by major market media and will soon get television exposure. "One day, and I really believe this," says a CIAA coach who asked his name no be used, "people will think of Bill Hayes the way people think of that Grambling guy now. " Edie Robinson, That Grambling Guy", is the head coach at Grambling State. He is also just three wins short of 400. "I am convinced," says A&T chancellor Ed Fort, "that Bill is one of the premier coaches, black or white, that there is in the country with his success on the field and his success academically. We're just proud to be a part of the Hayes team because Hayes is a winner." But as successful as he's been a his overall record of 137-73-2 rank him as one of the nation's winningest coaches a hayes has never been able to reach one of his big dreams: coaching in Division I. N.C. A&T is a NCAA Division I-AA school, away from the big money,



N.C. A&T Head Coach
Bill Hayes

bowl games and big dreams at schools like Miami and Tennessee. And once, just once, Hayes wanted to taste what it was like. It appears that may never happen. In the Carolinas, there was never a black head

football or basketball coach Wake Forest's Jim Caldwell was hired three years ago. Former N.C. Central football coach Bishop Harris, replaced by Larry Little, has watched for two decades as talented black coaches, like Hayes, have been passed over by predominately white schools. What will it take to change that? "Jesus Christ," Harris says, "will have to come back down to Earth." What's clear is this: hiring a black coach who hasn't proven himself at a predominately white school is considered a risk. And as budgets balloon (North Carolina's annual budget, for example, is well over \$20 million) it increases pressure to produce winning teams and appease big donors. Bit-time schools want

coaches who not only know the game but also can handle budgets and are savvy with public relations, says Bill Carr, who runs a Charlotte-based firm that specializes in finding college coaches. "I think the greatest questions come in terms of management skills," Carr told the *Charlotte Observer*.

-Bill Hayes "For an unproven person of irrespective of race and I'm talking about the ability to demonstrate that you can handle a \$5 million budget. If you've never done it before, the administration is at risk. After producing seasons of 4-6, 11-1 and 11-1, Hayes inquired about the head job at Wake Forest. "I'll never forget a comment that was made by a staunch booster," Hayes says. "He said, 'Bill, I know you will do a great job, but I'm just curious to know as to how you would handle the Deacon Club.' And my comment back to him a it was just like it was yesterday a I said, I thought the Deacon club was

formed to support the athletic program. I didn't know the football coach was supposed to support the Deacon club."

"I didn't know," Hayes says, "you had to be a certain type guy." Hayes said he has never interviewed for a Division I-A job, despite inquiring a N.C. State and East Carolina.

Hayes doesn't seem bitter about any of this. He just continues to work hard at the game he loves because it's honest. Maybe the administrators always aren't or maybe the players aren't, but Bill Hayes is trying his hardest to be honest. To stay honest.

He just wants this year's A&T team; to finish better than last year's 6-5 team. His team isn't as young as a year ago and Hayes hopes it'll stay much healthier. He wants to run more and not force quarterback Maseo Bolin to run for his left-handed life and throw nearly as much as he did in '94.

Hayes wants his team to challenge again for the MEAC title, to keep winning, to stay good. Mainly, though, Hayes just wants to keep on doing what he's been doing.

"Coaching has given me a chance to remain a kid," he says, "I've been in college for 30 years. It demands that you put a lot into, coaching, but you get so much out of it."

-By Langston Wertz Jr.

The Bill Hayes File:

- 1965: Northside (Va.) High, assistant coach
- 1996: Paisley (N.C.) High, defensive coach
- 1967-72: N. Forsyth (N.C.) high defensive coordinator
- 1973-75: Wake Forest University offensive backs coach
- 1976-87: ahead coach Winston-Salem State (record 89-40-2, 12 years)
- 1987: present ahead coach N.C. A&T (record 48-31, seven years)
- Overall record: 137-73-2 (19 years)
- Honors: 1978, NCAA District I coach of the year; NAIA District 26 coach of the year; Chevrolet Division II, District III Coach of the year; CIAA coach of the year; 1980, Black College All-Star Bowl coach; 1985, CIAA co-coach of the year; 1986, CIAA co-coach of the year; 1987, co-coach of the year; 1990, Sheridan Broadcast Network coach of the year; 1991, MEAC coach of the year; 1992, Pigskin Club of Washington D.C. coach of the year, Mutual Black Network coach of the year.