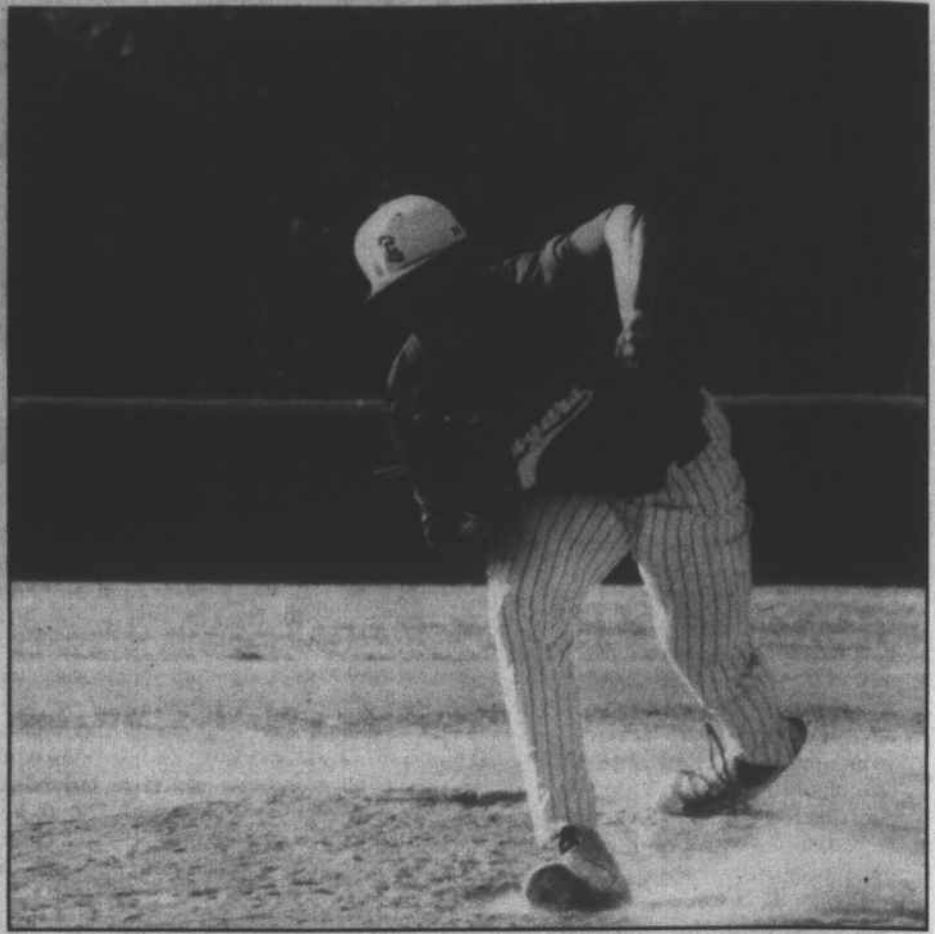




Photos by Craig T. Greenlee

Marcus McKoy hit .314 in his final season of prep baseball.



Marcus McKoy was an All-State pick as a senior at Calvary Baptist Day School.

Pitcher

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son, McKoy, who bats from the right side, hit .314 with two home runs and 13 RBIs.

It's been a fruitful season for McKoy, an All-State pitcher and two-time all-league pick in the PACIS 2-A Conference. McKoy attracted much interest from college scouts and he recently chose Winston-Salem State over Wake Forest, UNC, East Carolina, Elon, N.C. A&T, UNC Asheville and UNCG.

"There were several factors I looked at in my decision to sign with the Rams," he said. "I can stay at home and play college ball, plus the coaches really wanted me. Not only that, but they have a great place to play (BB&T Ball Park, home of the Winston-Salem Dash)."

The baseball transition from high school to college has already started for McKoy. From late May through late

July, he'll play with the Thomasville-based HT Locos, a developmental wood-bat summer team made up of college players. Coach Kevin Ritsche of WSSU is confident that McKoy will make an impact in his rookie year of college ball.

"Marcus is a talented competitor with tremendous upside," said Ritsche, whose team fell two games short of advancing to this year's Division II College World Series. "He's got size and is very athletic. I see him coming in and contributing right away as a pitcher and at other positions."

McKoy's high school career was nearly derailed before it ever started. He missed two full seasons at West Forsyth because of injuries. As a freshman, he suffered a concussion when he was hit in the eye by a baseball during pre-game warm-ups. The aftermath of the injury was so severe that he was forced to sit out the entire season.

A year later, during an early-season game, McKoy broke his leg in two places after sliding into home plate

from third base. This was another confidence-crushing injury, another disappointing ending.

McKoy transferred to Mount Tabor, hoping to get playing time. The Spartans had a deep roster and as a result, he would have to wait for an opportunity, which never materialized that year.

Rather than staying at Mount Tabor for what would've been his senior year, McKoy opted to attend Calvary and reclassify. By doing so, he was granted an added year of eligibility which mean he could play for two years.

"Making that move was the most memorable thing that happened for me in high school," said McKoy. "I finally got in a situation where I could play as much as I wanted. That gave me the opportunity to show what I could do."

"I always looked at those injuries at minor setbacks. It challenged my mental toughness. But I have such a love for the game and I wanted to play in college. That's why I kept coming back."

Lady Rams

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The women listened and they prospered. Winston-Salem State delivered several stellar performances at the nationals held last week in Allendale, Mich. In the team standings, the Lady Rams tallied 18 points to finish tied for 12th in the country, the best in school history. Seven of the eight WSSU athletes who qualified for the nationals placed among the top nine to earn All-America honors.

"The day went extremely well," said Turner. "We came in ranked 26th (as a team) and ended up 12th. That's a big step for us. It's a strong indication that the program is headed in the right direction. Not only is this a boost for the ladies who made All-American, but it provides added motivation for those team members who didn't qualify for nationals this year."

WSSU's best showing came in the 4x100 relay. For the second year in a row, the Lady Rams finished as the national runners-up. Tajanel McNeill, Nya Michaux, Raven Covington and Ty-Leah Hampton clocked their best time of the season (45.5 seconds) in spite of having problems with baton exchanges. Entering last week, WSSU was ranked fourth nationally in this event.

"They were far from perfect with the baton and yet, they still ran 45.5," said Turner. "As coaches, we preach all the time that there's no reason to panic if things don't go smoothly with baton passes. They stayed calm and they executed."

In the 4x400 relay, the Lady Rams have taken a quantum leap. The four-ness of Ro'Daijah Faucette, Raven Hamilton, Hampton and Tametris Morrison posted a surprise fifth-place finish with a time of 3 minutes, 43.64 seconds. Prior to the nationals, they were No. 9 in the country.

Turner is excited about the possibilities for this relay event in the years to come. All four runners are sophomores who have two more years of college eligibility remaining. "This group came to the nationals with a hunger to do well," she said. "They were so determined that they would run fast enough to make it



Photos by Craig T. Greenlee

Tajanel McNeill closed out her college career as a 5-time All-American.



Coach Inez Turner, WSSU women's track coach



to the podium and be recognized as All-Americans."

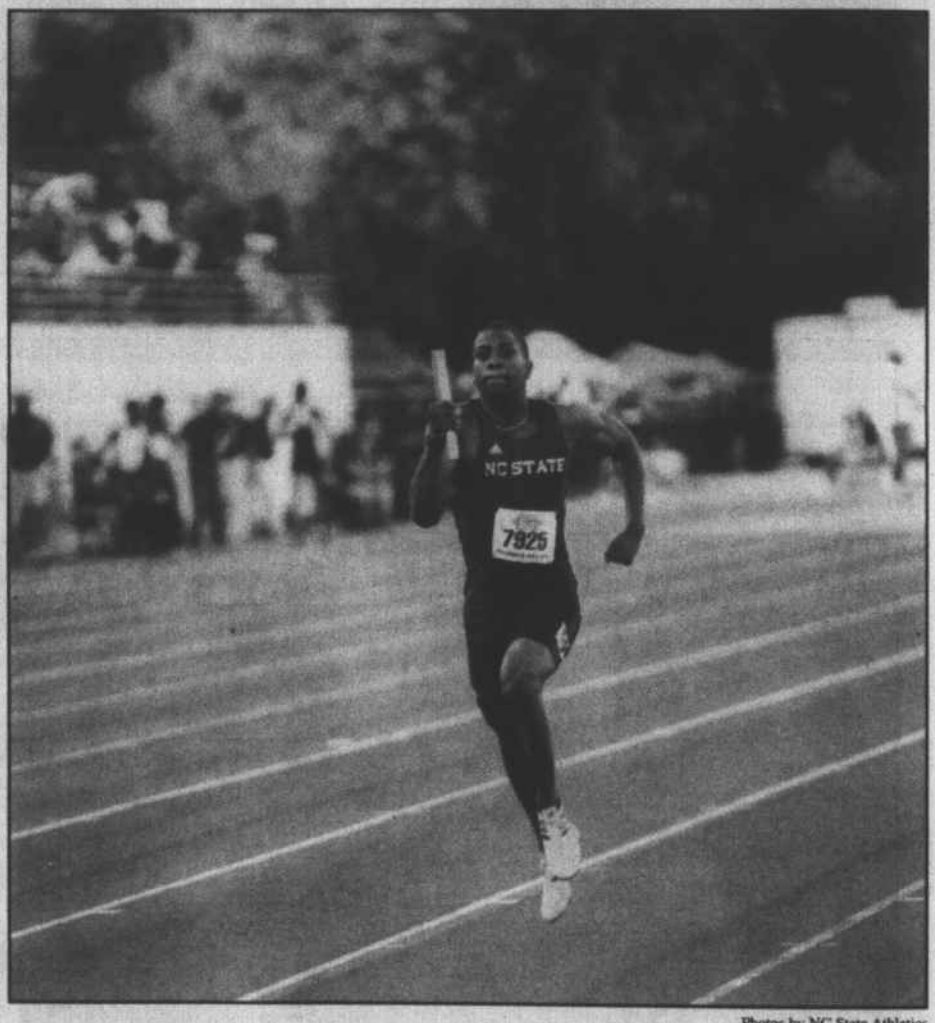
Morrison, who anchored the 4x400, turned in the top individual finish for the Lady Rams. She finished fifth in the 400-meter hurdles with career-best time of 59.22 seconds "Tametris was awesome," said Turner. "There was no question that she really wanted it (All-America status). She's all heart and guts. The way she performed at the nationals is just the beginning. Next year, I'm expecting greater things from her."

McNeill closed out her college career as a 5-time All-American (indoors and outdoors) at WSSU. She ran the lead leg on 4x100 and placed seventh in the triple jump (40-feet, 3 1/2 inches).

Covington, this year's CIAA indoor champion at

60 meters, was ninth in the 100-meter dash (11.82). Based on what transpired in the preliminary round, she was expected to post a higher finish. Covington, ranked 19th before the nationals, ran a personal best of 11.55 in the prelims, which is also a new school record.

In the 100 finals, though, a recurring arm injury which has hampered Covington all season surfaced. As a result, she wasn't able to run up to her capability. "I'm not making excuses," said Turner. "But Raven hasn't had the opportunity to compete a full season without injury, so that's something that we'll continue to work on. Raven has overcome the odds. A year ago, she ran 12.1 in the 100 and now she's much improved."



Photos by NC State Athletics

Expectations are high for Shannon Patterson as he moves forward in his college track career.

back, there wasn't a lot of time left in the season.

"The key for him is that he has a big heart and he's ferocious when it comes to training. During those few weeks, he got stronger and faster. It was easy to see that he's just scratching the surface. I can't wait for fall practice to start."

At the time of Patterson's return, the Wolfpack had two regular-season competitions remaining before the conference meet. Even though it was small window of opportunity, Patterson made it work to his advantage. A week before the ACC, he qualified for the open 400 (48.46 personal best) with a third-place finish in the Duke Twilight meet and he also won the 200 with a personal-best time of 21.64 seconds.

"With me being out for all those weeks, I thought I'd be red-shirted," said Patterson, a Business Administration major. "Fortunately, I had a speedy recovery. Even with such a late start, I thought I could still qualify for the ACC."

"In my first meet back, I ran 48.6 (in the 400) and missed qualifying by a tenth-of-a-second. So, I felt real good about my chances when it was time

for the next meet. I learned a lot about patience this year."

"You come to understand that as long as you keep working hard, the desired results will come at some point. This was a productive year. I just took everything one step at a time. My sickness was the only setback."

This summer figures to be a pivotal time for Patterson. Even though he'll be a sophomore next school year, he'll still be a virtual freshman in terms of running the intermediate hurdles.

The last time he ran hurdles was his senior year of high school. Patterson won't run in any hurdles races this summer. Instead, he'll engage in Ards' workouts which are designed to reacquaint Patterson with the technical and timing aspects of the event.

Ards declined to reveal what her specific time expectations are for Patterson in the intermediates. One widely-accepted rule of thumb for predicting a time, is to add 1.5 to 2 seconds to the hurdler's best time in the open 400.

Given that frame of reference, and assuming that Patterson has no injuries, the potential is there for him to run in the high 49s,

low 50s, which would place him among the league's top five (based on times at the ACC meet earlier this month). Patterson embraces the challenges the event presents.

"It's a difficult race," he said. "You have to stay relaxed and not get over-anxious. Just trust in your technique and training, and don't over-think it. The 400 hurdles is a fight to the finish."

In high school, Patterson didn't become a full-time hurdler until his junior year. As a senior, he was fifth in the 300 hurdles at the state outdoor championships and fifth in the 55 hurdles at the indoor state meet. That same winter, Patterson was the state runner-up in the 300-meter dash.

"Coming out of high school, it was hard to tell just where we might put him," said Ards. "He hadn't run that many open races. But we knew he had all the tools. Given Shannon's confidence and his willingness to work, I expect him to do well as a sophomore. He ran a 47 (seconds) split in the 4x400 relay at conference, and he's going to improve on that. Who knows what would have happened this year if he hadn't gotten sick?"