

Photo by Craig T. Greenlee

Packers defensive back Tazhae Woods (in gray) closes in on a Mint Hill runner near the goal line during the AYF state championship game.

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Warren realizes that even though his team has been dominant up to this point, they are sure to be thoroughly tested in their pursuit of winning a Division I national title. "A big key for us is to stay poised, and do the best we can to keep our rotations going so we'll have fresh players in the game at all times."

"During our time off, we've emphasized to the

players that our trip to Florida is about business. It's not a trip that we're taking for fun."

Raiders: Since finishing the regular season at break-even (3-3), Kernersville's Junior Midgets have been on a roll in Division II post-season play. There's nothing fancy about this group. It's old-school football and from all indications, the players have totally embraced no-frills football.

"It's old-fashioned fundamentals," said coach Scott Phelps, whose team

is 6-3. "There's not a lot of speed on the roster, but what we have is a hard-nosed group. We'll throw the ball only when it's necessary. Our game plan is to control the clock and get three yards at a time. As long as we do that, we keep the ball and we keep moving."

Offensively, Darius Williams is the workhorse at tailback. On defense, Brendan Conway serves as one of the anchors.

"We just want to stay grounded and stay true to our roots," said Phelps.

"There's no need to change. We're going to stick with what we do, which is ground and pound."

Bobcats: The regular season ended in defeat, but since that time, the results since have been very rewarding. Union Cross won three straight post-season games to advance to the Division II nationals in the Pee Wee Division (11-12 age group).

"We can do well if we can stay hungry and not let our recent success go to our head," said coach Ralph

Turner, whose team is 10-2. "We feel like we're able to create match-ups that give us an edge on offense."

The Bobcats get the job done with a highly productive passing game. They run a variation of the spread and will use as many as ten different formations during the course of a game.

Quarterback Ty Lyles benefits from having a skilled group of play-makers to work with. Javon Meyers, Jaron Sellers, Joseph Ritchens, Kenyon

Mosquera, Christopher Joines, Jalen Thorns and Jalen Douglas all get their turns to contribute to an offense that averaged 35 points a game in the AYF Atlantic Regionals three weeks ago.

On defense, George Brown, Elijah Thomas and Justice Wiggins set the tempo. Union Cross plays a 4-4 base defense, but will also employ different looks with a 3-4 and some 3-5-1.

"We're having a great run," said Turner. "We're confident that we can finish this run and bring home a

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"Dominique is tremendous for us night in and night out," said coach Eugene Love of Prep. "Jada has grown so much as a floor leader. On the court, she truly is an extension of the head coach."

Claytor's versatility makes her a prized commodity. At 5-feet-10, she's physical enough to play power forward and even center, if needed. Yet, she has the skill, agility and savvy to run the point and play on the perimeter as a

transferring from Matthews Weddington last year. For the season, she averaged 10.7 points, 3.6 assists and 3.2 steals per game. The addition of Craig to the roster further bolstered the Phoenix's already stout defense.

"Jada is excellent at applying on-the-ball pressure and she's the spearhead of our defense," said Love. "Once she joined Christina (Caesar) in our backcourt, it took us to another level defensively."

"With her size and athleticism, Dominique gives us a lot of flexibility at both ends of the floor."

-Eugene Love, Coach

shooting guard or small forward. A year ago, Claytor averaged 9 points, 6.3 rebounds, 3.5 assists and 3.4 steals per game.

"With her size and athleticism, Dominique gives us a lot of flexibility at both ends of the floor," said Love. "She doesn't need to be a dominant scorer for our team to play to its full capability. The stat sheet doesn't reveal everything she can do on a basketball court."

Claytor, who has a 3.8 grade-point average, picked ECU over Nebraska, Memphis, Georgetown and Virginia Commonwealth. The major selling points that won her over were the team's camaraderie, along with the school's Air Force ROTC program. "The team is like a family and I'm very interested in ROTC," she said. "I'll probably major in engineering, math or science."

Craig blossomed in her first season at Prep after

Not only that, but she's becoming a knock-down shooter."

East Tennessee State's campus environment combined with the strong bond between players and coaches caused Craig to take a more intense interest in the school. When she learned that the school has a well-respected program in physical therapy, she knew there would be no need for her to make any more recruiting visits.

"I felt like the time was right and it (East Tennessee State) is the perfect fit," said Craig, whose grade-point average is 3.75. "Because of that, there was no reason for me to wait any longer to make my final decision."

In addition to ETSU, Craig was recruited by UNC Greensboro, UNC Wilmington, Jacksonville University (Fla.), Virginia Commonwealth, Elon, UNC Asheville and High Point University.

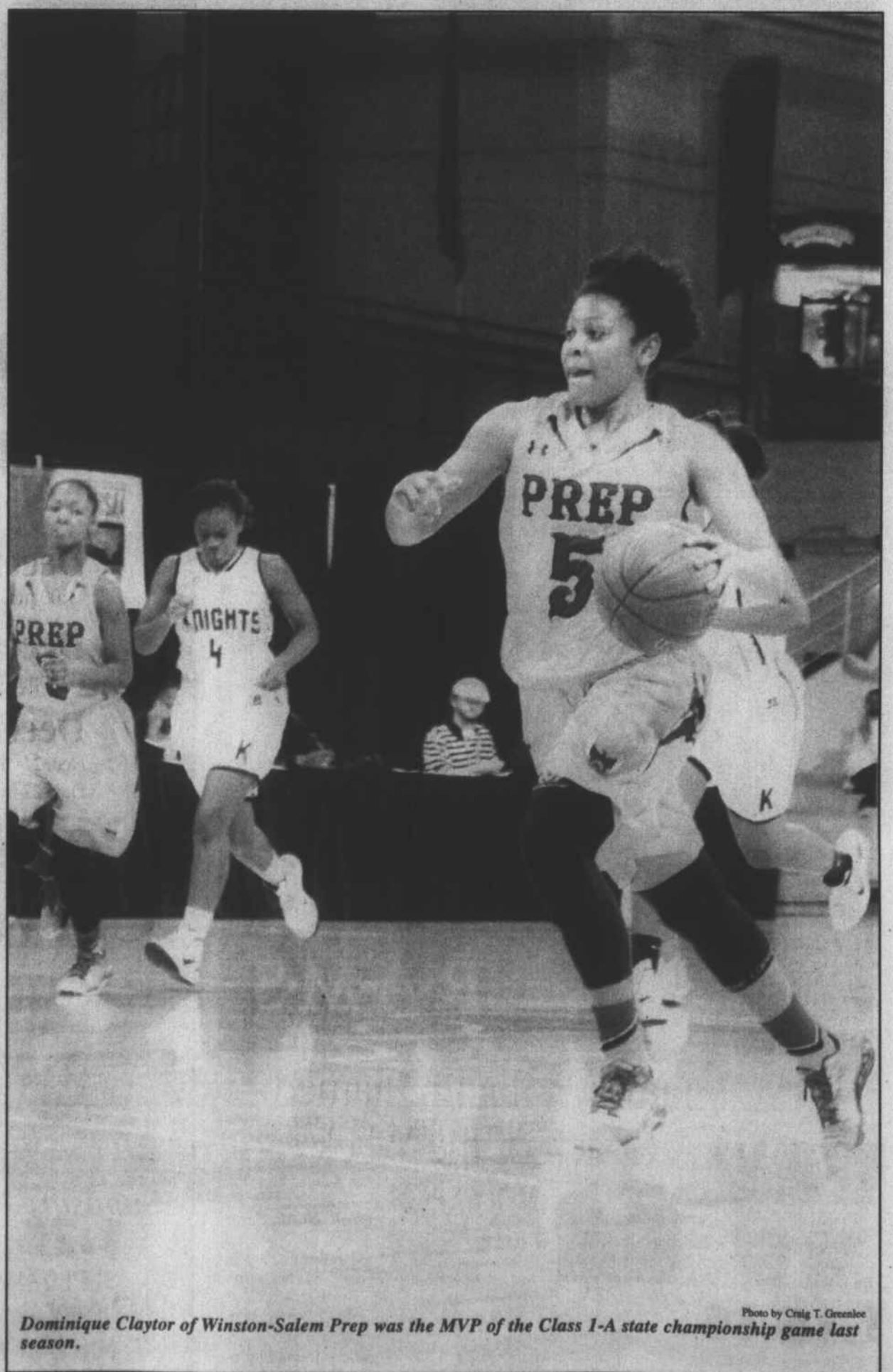


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Dominique Claytor of Winston-Salem Prep was the MVP of the Class 1-A state championship game last season.