

# East Columbus Grabs Controversial OT Win Over West Brunswick Trojans

BY DOUG RUTTER

Coach Gary Battle collapsed against a wall in the East Columbus dressing room and struggled to catch his breath. His sweaty, wrinkled brow showed signs of the stress he had just endured.

Fifty feet away, inside the West Brunswick gym, Coach Charlie Stevens was consoled by supporters. Moments earlier, the fiery Stevens had to be restrained as he confronted game officials.

This was the scene at the West gym Friday night after Battle's Gators escaped with a controversial, 67-66, overtime win over Stevens' Trojans in the most intense high school basketball game in Shallotte has seen in years.

"Honestly, I thought it was a three," Stevens said. "Unfortunately the officials didn't see it that way."

Stevens was referring to the shot that West Brunswick's Jonathan Williams drained with five seconds remaining in overtime—a shot that appeared to tie the score and force a second overtime.

Game officials initially ruled that Williams' acrobatic, double-pumping, gravity-defying basket came from behind the three-point line and had knotted the score at 67-67.

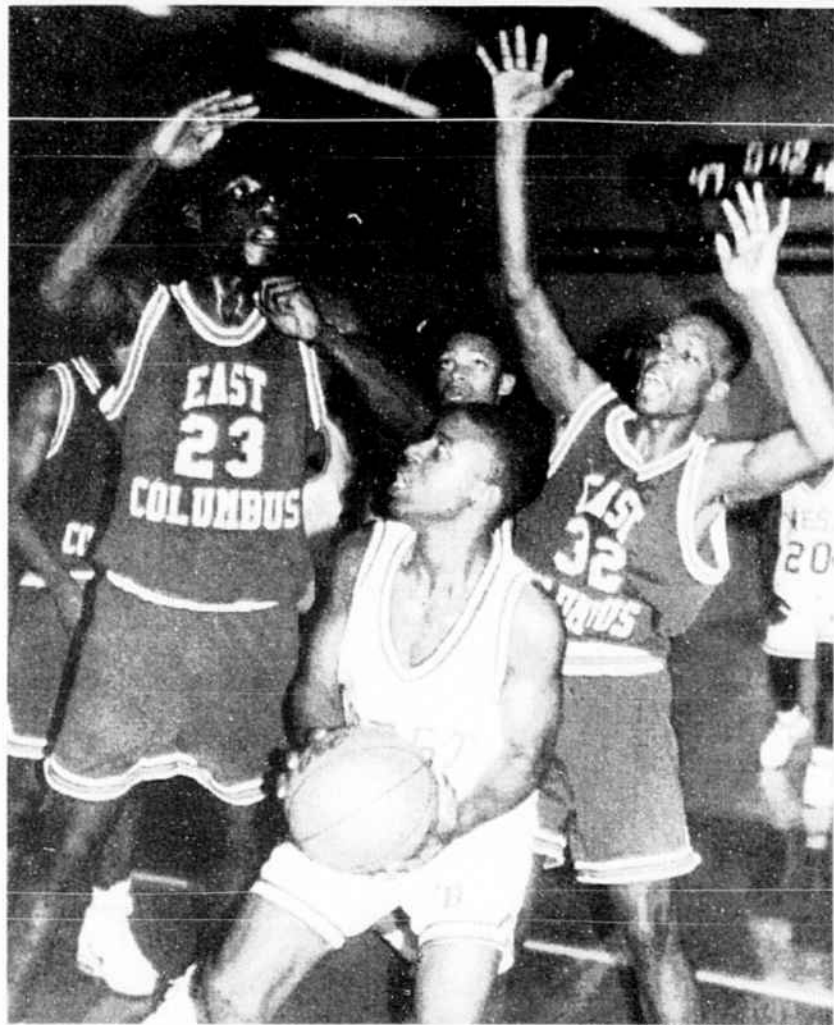
Stevens, and most of the home crowd, erupted a few seconds later when the officials reversed their decision and ruled that Williams was inside the three-point arc when he launched the shot.

Game over. Gators win. "It was a good ball game for the fans," Battle said of the back-and-forth contest that featured 18 lead changes. "His kids kept hustling, and my kids kept hustling. It's a shame somebody had to lose this game."

The loss dropped West Brunswick to 2-2 in the Waccamaw Conference and 4-8 overall. East Columbus improved to 3-0 in the conference and 13-1 overall.

Boubacar Aw, a 6-foot-7 transfer student from Senegal, Africa, who will play his college ball at Georgetown, led the Gators with 29 points. Demetric Jacobs added 19.

Williams scored 22 and Eric Johnson had 18 to lead West Brunswick, which gave a tremendous effort but could not match East Columbus' inside strength down the stretch.



STAFF PHOTOS BY DOUG RUTTER

WEST BRUNSWICK'S TY BROWN finds himself in a tough spot Friday against East Columbus. Defending is Boubacar Aw (23) and Fred Munn (32).

West Brunswick, which led 36-35 at halftime and 50-49 after three quarters, took a 61-56 lead with 1:45 left in regulation on a pair of Anthony Moody free throws.

On two straight possessions, however, the Gators went down low to Aw and he delivered baskets to cut West's lead to 61-60 with 1:19 remaining. Aw then hit the front end of a one-and-one to tie the score with 23 seconds left.

West Brunswick had a chance to win at the end of regulation when East Columbus' Lafayette Waddell was whistled for a traveling violation under the Gator basket with eight seconds to play.

But West's Derek Frink had one shot partially blocked and then mistimed a 12-foot, baseline jumper with two seconds remaining.

In overtime, Aw gave East Columbus a 65-61 lead with two quick buckets. But West's Williams nailed a three-pointer from the left corner to cut the lead to 65-64 with 49 seconds left.

A tip-in by East's Waddell with 20 seconds to play bumped the Gators' lead to 67-64 before Williams' controversial basket.

Battle said the turning point in the game was when East Columbus started looking inside to Aw, the biggest and strongest player on the floor. Aw scored 11 points in the fourth quarter and the overtime period.

The lead had changed hands 11 times in the first half. West Brunswick raced out to an 8-2 lead in the first 2 minutes, 10 seconds, but East Columbus rallied and took a 9-8 lead just one minute later.

## WACCAMAW CONFERENCE BASKETBALL STANDINGS Through Monday, Jan. 24

BOYS		
Team	League	Overall
Whiteville	4-0	10-3
East Columbus	3-0	13-1
West Columbus	2-1	6-5
West Brunswick	2-2	4-8
Pender	1-2	6-7
South Brunswick	0-3	3-9
South Columbus	0-4	4-9

GIRLS		
Team	League	Overall
Whiteville	3-1	12-2
West Brunswick	3-1	5-7
South Brunswick	2-1	8-5
South Columbus	2-2	8-6
Pender	1-2	8-5
East Columbus	1-2	5-9
West Columbus	0-3	2-10

The game went back and forth the rest of the way, and neither team led by more than five points after the first quarter.

"I thought a couple times at the end we didn't execute as well as we could have and we could have stole one from them," Stevens said.

"I'm proud of my kids. If this is any indication of how we can play we should be alright the rest of the way. But we can't be satisfied because we played well tonight. We have to go out there and do it every night."

Both coaches had nothing but positive things to say about the players following the game.

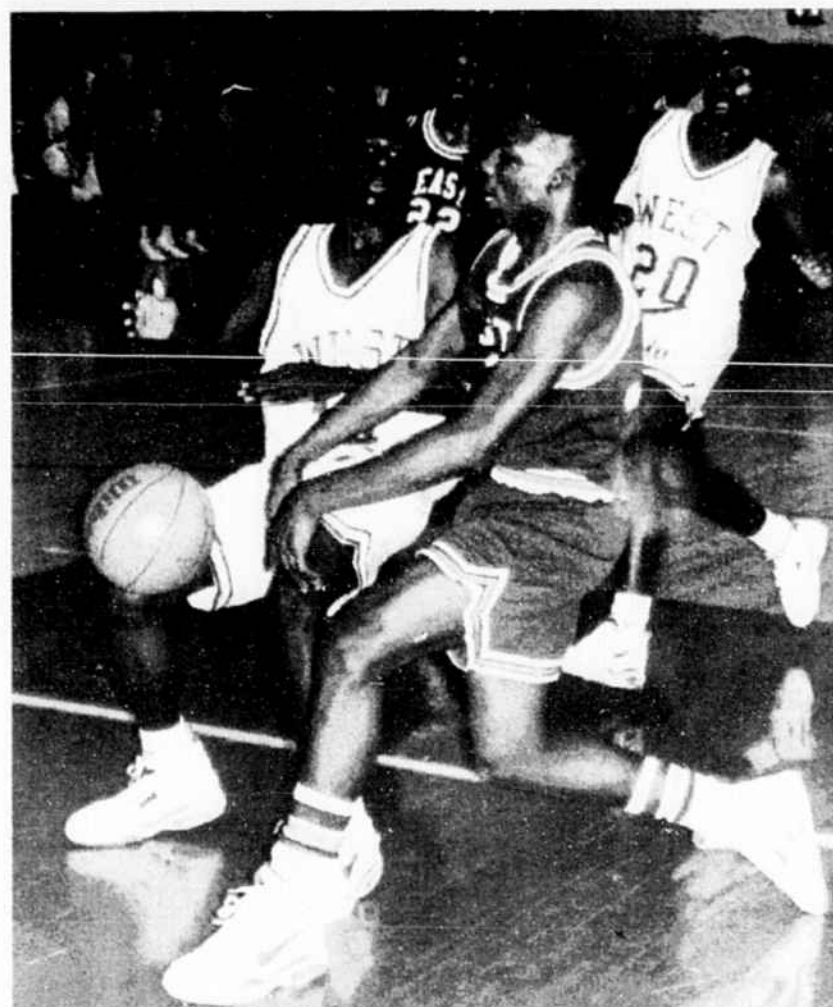
"They've got a real good basketball team," Stevens said of the Gators. "They've got a chance to win the state 2A championship."

Battle tried to downplay the fact that East Columbus made the Associated Press high school basketball poll last week for the first time in the school's two-year history. The Gators are ranked 10th in the state 2A ranks.

"We play it one game at a time," Battle said. "It's good for the community and good for the school, but polls don't mean anything this time of year."

Battle said West Brunswick "is going to win some ball games. They've got a good squad. I have a lot of respect for Charlie Stevens."

West Brunswick had three games slated this week, including a Tuesday night game against visiting West Columbus. The Trojans travel



WEST'S JONATHAN WILLIAMS (left) knocks the ball away from East Columbus' Fred Munn during Friday night's game in Shallotte. Williams led the Trojans with 22 points.

to Wilmington Laney Thursday and visit South Brunswick on Saturday.

**Score By Quarters**  
 East Columbus 21 14 12 6—67  
 West Brunswick 21 15 14 11 5—66  
 East Columbus scoring: Aw, 29; Jacobs, 19; Munn, 9; Waddell, 6; Beatty, 4.

West Brunswick scoring: Williams, 22; Johnson, 18; Frink, 8; Daniels, 8; Moody, 6; C. Brown, 2; T. Brown, 2.

## East Columbus Tops Trojan JV

West Brunswick's junior varsity basketball team nearly overcame an 18-point, fourth-quarter deficit Friday night before falling to visiting East Columbus, 55-52.

Jamal Stanley and Juan Bellamy scored 14 points apiece to lead the Trojans, who fell to 0-4 in the Waccamaw Conference and 1-7 overall.

Rashawn Wright scored 13 points, Jimmy Bowen added 12 and Torey Hines had 11 to lead the Gators.

In conference action last Tuesday, Whiteville got 22 points from Timmy Slater in a 55-54 win over visiting West Brunswick. Stanley led the Trojans with 20 points.

## West's Eric Johnson Cans 31 In Loss At Whiteville Tuesday

West Brunswick's Eric Johnson scored a career-high 31 points, but it wasn't enough as Whiteville rolled to a 71-66 win over the Trojans in high school boys' basketball action last Tuesday.

Five players scored in double figures for the Wolfpack, led by Jablonski Moore and Andre McCullum with 16 points each. Kevin McKenzie scored 12, Curtis Norton added 11 and Shannon Soles had 10 for Whiteville.

The Wolfpack improved to 3-0 in the Waccamaw Conference and 8-3 overall, while West Brunswick suffered its first conference loss of the season and fell to 2-1 in the league and 4-7 overall.

Johnson, a junior guard who had been averaging about 12 points per game, had his best night of the season. Derek Frink added 11 points and Timothy Daniels chipped in 10 for the Trojans.

Whiteville jumped out to a 20-12 lead after one quarter and held a 35-28 lead at halftime. The Wolfpack extended its advantage to 59-47 after three quarters before the Trojans made a run.

West Brunswick outscored White-

ville 9-4 to open the fourth quarter, but the Trojans never got closer than five points.

The teams will square off again Feb. 11 in Shallotte.

**Score By Quarters**  
 West Brunswick 12 16 19 19—66  
 Whiteville 20 15 24 12—71  
 West Brunswick scoring: Johnson, 31; Frink, 11; Daniels, 10; Williams, 9; Moody, 5.  
 Whiteville scoring: Moore, 16; McCullum, 16; McKenzie, 12; Norton, 11; Soles, 10; Teachey, 3; Thurmond, 2; McCray, 1.

## Awards Night Set At West Brunswick

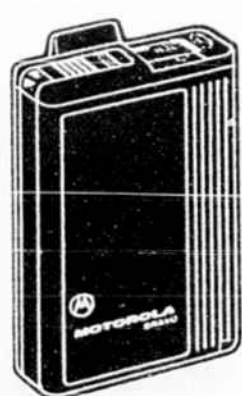
West Brunswick High School will hold its fall sports awards reception Monday, Jan. 31, at 7 p.m. in the school library.

Awards will be presented for girls' tennis, volleyball, soccer and junior varsity football. A reception will follow.

A separate banquet honoring the varsity football team will be held later this year, said Assistant Athletic Director Martie Gillis.

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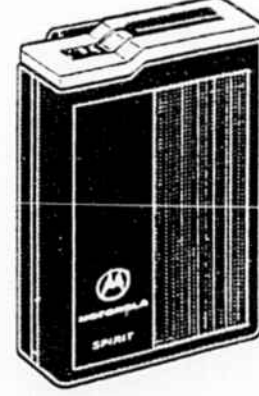
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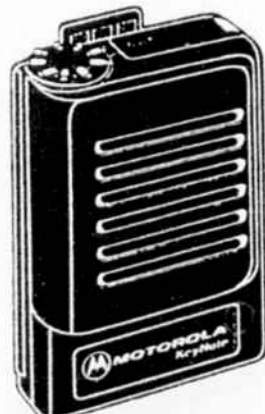
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