

Sports

UNCA crushes Catamounts

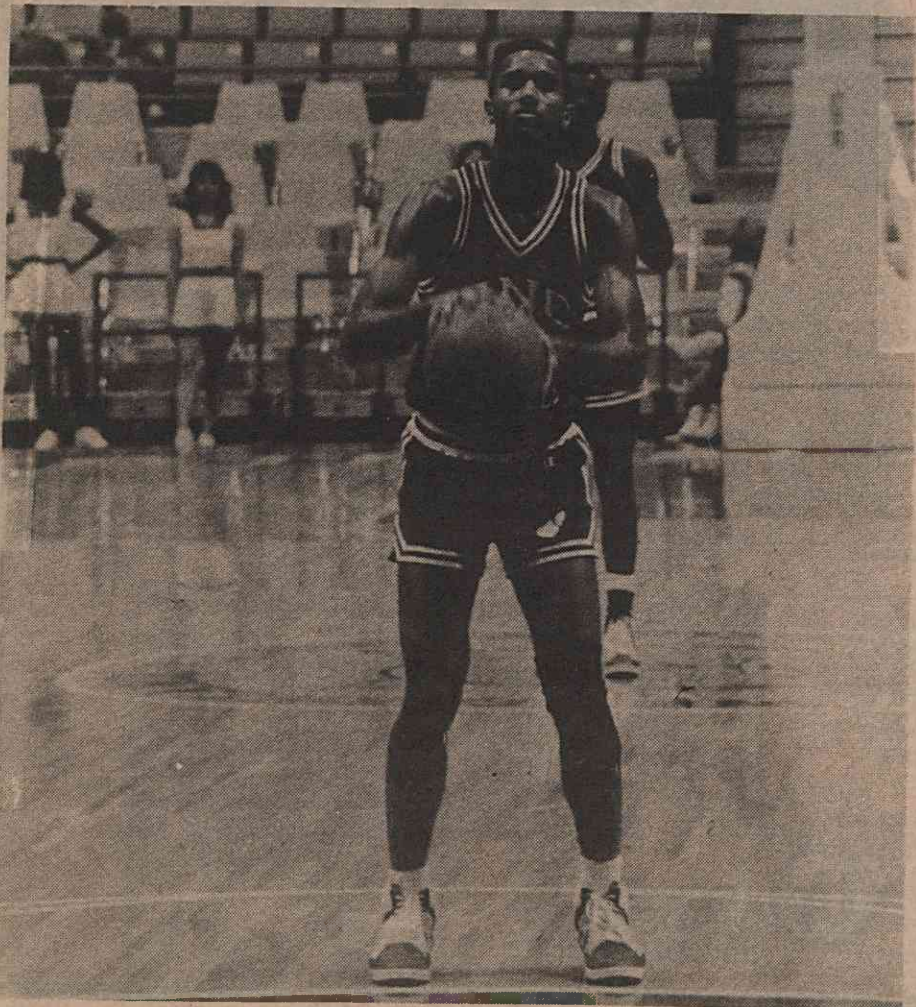


Staff photos—Chris Allison

A big win at Western

(Above) UNCA basketball teammates: (facing camera) William Funderburk, Van Wilkins, Randy Shepard, (backs to camera) Ricky Chatman, Derrick Worrels, huddle in anticipation of their upcoming win over Western Carolina.

(Below) UNCA's Gerald Rutherford takes aim from the charity stripe in the game at Cullowhee as teammate Willy Simpson looks on.



By Chris Allison
Sports Editor

The UNCA men's basketball team took a giant step forward in establishing themselves as an NCAA Division I team when they crushed Western Carolina University 85-67 on Monday night.

"It's a big win for us," Coach Jerry Green said, "the first over a Southern Conference team."

Senior Van Wilkins ignited the Bulldogs with a career high 36 points against the Catamounts, including 3-of-4 shooting from the 3-point range.

The Bulldogs never trailed and took an early 6-0 lead. The Catamounts cut the lead to two points before going down by seven at the half on Gerald Rutherford's follow shot at the halftime buzzer.

In the second half, Wilkins took up where he left off by opening up with an outside jumper. Leroy Gasque answered for the Catamounts on the other end and Western gradually eroded the Bulldogs' lead to three.

The Catamounts appeared to be mounting a comeback, but UNCA proved that they are a much more mature team than many originally thought.

With the momentum swinging in favor of the Catamounts, and the crowd once again becoming a factor, the Bulldogs made a 10 point run despite strong defensive pressure from the Catamounts. From this point on the Bulldogs never relin-

quished their big lead.

Randy Shepard pumped in 11 points for the Bulldogs, including a nine of 10 performance from the foul line.

Gerald Rutherford added 10 points and 10 rebounds for the Bulldogs. Ricky Chatman added 8 points and 8 rebounds for the Bulldogs including a 3-of-4 performance from the field and a 2-of-2 game from the free throw line.

The Bulldogs went into Monday's game as the underdogs to the Catamounts, who were picked to win the Southern Conference. "The newspaper (Asheville Citizen-Times) had us mad in that it said we were going to lose by 22," junior forward Chatman said.

Coach Jerry Green said the win demonstrates some consistency.

"We've had two tough games but I think overall it means some consistency for us," he said after the game.

On the other hand, WCU coach Steve Cottrell wasn't impressed with his team's effort. "We played flat," he said. "They just out-hustled us."

The Bulldogs will travel to East Tennessee State University on Saturday night before hosting Furman University at the Civic Center on Monday. "We're just going in with the same attitude just to play hard and not let up," Chatman said.

Before successfully taking on Western, the Bulldogs defeated Barber-Scotia College 86-65 Saturday night.

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