

Knights display winning form in '98

by Mel Collins

The Knight's basketball team has started the season with a 4-3 regular season record. That does not include their third place finish at the Marriott Tournament over break. The balance of record carries over in the CVAC, where their record is 1-2. Their conference losses both came on the road, one to Queens College and the other to Mt. Olive. The team is undefeated at home and seem like a different squad on the road. There is playing time for everyone, as there are often full squad replacements during the game. In fact, Coach Mark Peeler's placement of Ronald Robinson and Fred McGhee in against UNC-Pembroke meant that all active players have seen action.

The home opener took place November 25 against the West Virginia Tech Golden Bears. Deon Wingfield opened the scoring with a two point basket, the first of his team-high 19-point effort on the night. Ken Evans added a three just before the team shift to put SA ahead. Anthony Rollins and Joe Jessen joined Wingfield in a strong defensive effort early. Jessen also used his ball-handling skills to thread the needle on a pass to Nick Mitchell, who converted a nice jump shot. Steve McCorkle and Omar Cooper contributed with aggressive defensive plays and some nice baskets to keep the Knights ahead. Brian McCollum and Ryan Alexander each added three point baskets to increase the lead. The intense, fast-paced first half ended with the Knights ahead, 47-30.

McCollum opened the second half scoring, but it was the defensive play of Wingfield, Rollins, and Mitchell which caught the crowd's attention. Jessen added a steal and a breakaway no-look-pass to McCorkle, who added another two to his stats. The Knights dominated the boards with strong rebounding by Larry Yon, Wingfield, McCollum and Rollins. McCorkle and Rollins also recorded blocked shots. The strong team effort in the physically aggressive game paid big dividends, as the Knights were victorious, 87-70.

On December 1, the Knights faced the Braves of UNC-Pembroke for the first time. Wingfield shot a three pointer to open the scoring. Evans hit his first three of the evening to start his team high 18 points on the evening. Scoring was not his only contribution, as he added strong defensive rebounding and steals

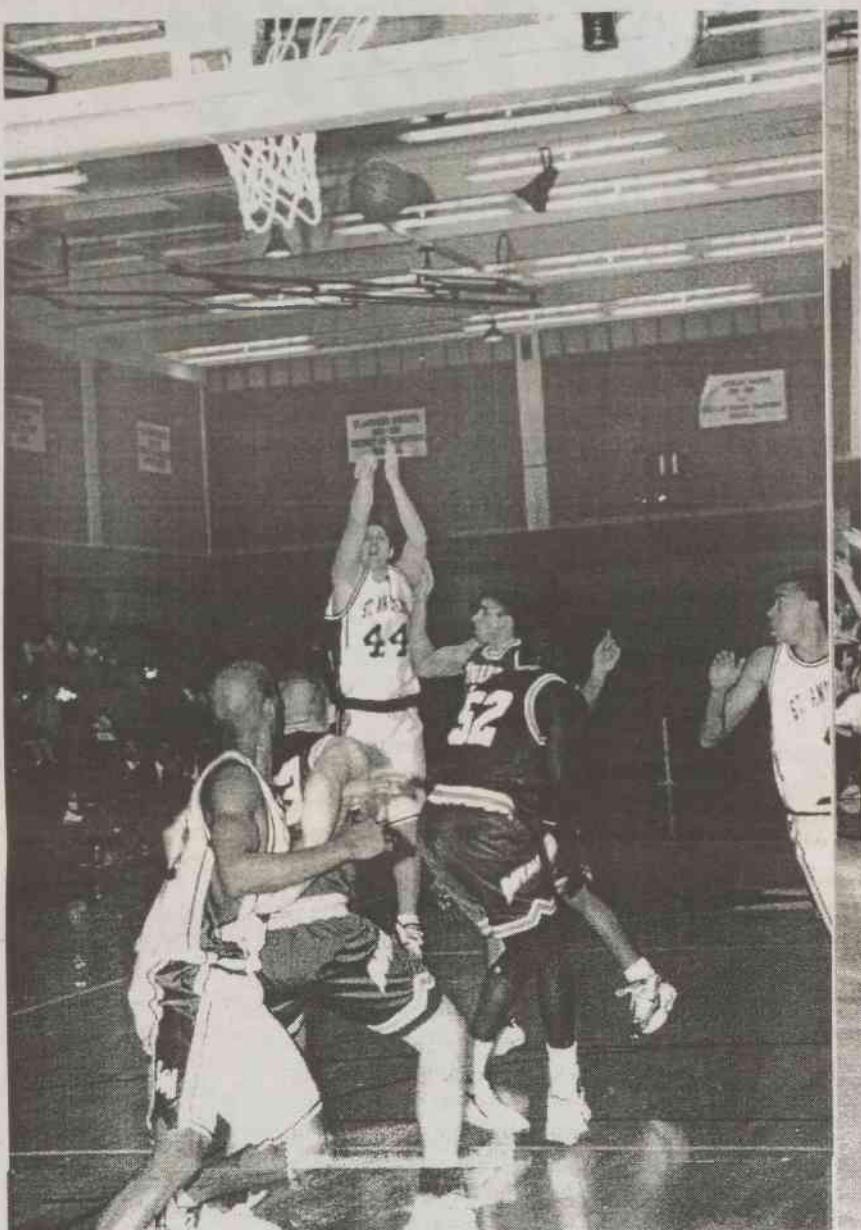
to his accomplishments. Rollins, Mitchell, McCorkle, John Walker, and Ben Beshears added strength to the defensive display. Carlton Horton, McCollum, Evans and Alexander also added offense, with three-point baskets to cushion the lead. Despite six team switch-ins in the first half, the momentum carried the Knights to a 40-26 half-time lead.

The dominance continued in the second half. Evans hit his third three-pointer to open the second half scoring. Jessen, Mitchell, McCollum and Wingfield also added three pointers in the half. As an added emphasis on scoring, Wingfield, Rollins and Mitchell took advantage on breakaways to dunk. Perhaps the only weakness the team showed was free throws. However, the eight missed points did not affect the outcome as the Knights were victorious 86-78.

To start Winter Term, the Knights faced off against the Longwood Lancers in CVAC competition. Wingfield again opened the scoring to start his 27-point effort for the evening. The scoring went back and forth, but the team showed its ability to keep the ball moving and follow up shots. Rollins led the defensive effort with six blocked shots and two defensive rebounds in the first half. McCollum, Walker, Wingfield, Jessen and McCorkle aided the defensive efforts. Evans rebounded a Rollins miss and converted a three-pointer. Cooper got an assist on an Alexander three-pointer while yelling "You better shoot that!" By the half, the Knights were ahead, 45-34.

A Longwood run started the second half but an Evans three stopped the skid. Jessen and McCollum added their range, each hitting two no doubt three-pointers in the second half. Wingfield continued his scoring tirade while Rollins added a monster rejection to further emphasize his defensive game. McCorkle had a sweet dunk to further prove the Knights' total game. The team worked with a lot of hustle to win 91-77.

The High Point Panthers arrived on January 12 to provide a challenge for the Knights. They responded with a slow start, as the first four points came off free throws by Mitchell and Jessen.



But Rollins helped to step it up with the first six of his 21 points to ignite the team. The Knights kept things going at both ends, balancing strong defense and aggressive offense to forge a lead. Hustle was key as the players forced turnovers by the Panthers but managed to maintain possession on some close plays. The strong shooting included multiple threes by McCollum, Evans, Wingfield and Alexander. As a result, the Knights led 44-30 at the half.

The team picked up where it left off after the break. Rollins and McCorkle became a pair of rejection specialists, blocking a combined nine shots. Added into the mix were defensive rebounds by Wingfield, Beshears,

Mitchell and Horton, as well as steals by Jessen and Evans. Evans converted his steal into a monster dunk and received a technical for hanging on the rim. The crowd was still going nuts and the bench remained standing while High Point hit their two free throws. Long distance scoring was also on call, with Beshears, McCollum, Mitchell and Yon contributing threes. There was electricity in the air as the Knights were victorious 85-76.

The team has come away looking very much like they could be the second best team in CVAC. Provided they can maintain this level of play, it may be a very enjoyable season to watch.