

Coach Harris resigns as head of Vikings

by Donald Perkins

On Nov. 18 1997 coach Elisha "Cadillac" Harris resigned as head football coach of the Elizabeth City State University Vikings. Harris said he was forced to resign because an academically ineligible player participated in the game against North Carolina Central.

"It was not our intent for him to get into the game, but he did," said Harris.

ECSU Athletic Director Edward McLean said the student wasn't supposed to even be on the field this season.

"I think the GPA was not high enough," said McLean. "He was very close, but close will only count in horse-shoes."

McLean said the University has al-

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ready notified the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) about the violation.

"We had to do these steps to self-report ourselves," said McLean.

Harris said that prior to the season McLean informed him that the player could not play football this season. Harris said that he later received the information from the compliance officer about which players were eligible to play and that he gave this information to his offensive and defensive coordinators.

McLean later announced that Harris was resigning as head coach "to pursue other opportunities."

Harris said he disagrees with McLean about the circumstances surrounding his resignation.

"As to my resignation, the truth is I was told that I would either be terminated on the spot and not finish out the year, or I could finish out the year if I resign," said Harris.

Harris said by resigning, he could take care of his family, since he would be able to stay until the end of the school year.

"The use of an ineligible player who played in a game that we lost is the tag," said Harris. "I'm the head coach and the responsibility lies on me."

Harris said he thinks the entire issue "should be investigated by groups of people that are interested in the truth."

Although Harris is uncertain about his career plans, he expressed faith in his abilities.

"Coaching is my livelihood," he said. "I will see what's on the college and high school level, and see which road I will take."

Harris said people knew his intentions were good in trying to rebuild the program.

"I worked with enough people over the years and they wouldn't question my integrity."

Harris also said he had wanted to meet with the team and tell them of his resignation, but that McLean declined his offer. McLean said that he would meet with the players himself.

Two members of the Viking team said they thought the coach's record was a factor in the change.

"The coaching change was due to come when you have two back-to-back losing seasons," said Bryant Wiggins. "I feel that a lot of pressure was put on Coach Harris and his staff when they first came in because of the 7-4 season we had the year before he got here. When he did not produce, everyone was ready to ship him off."

"Then with the pressure coming from the players about the new scholarship change, he was going downhill faster than he thought. I feel that he did what he could with the resources he was limited to. The whole program begins with the Athletic Department and if there is no money being put into the department for the football team then there is nothing any coach can do."

Another student, Lawrence Mack, complained of restricted playing time for "talented upperclassmen" in favor of younger players.

"When a team is that young you have to go to your upperclassmen but the coaching staff didn't do that," said Mack. "When you have upperclassmen who practice hard all week and prove they should play, why should they wonder if they are going to make a travel list or not over a freshman who sees limited playing time when we do play? This change might be better for the program."

Sports commentary

by Al Joyner, Sports Editor

The Viking basketball program is on the move. Where is it going? To the National Championship in Louisville, Ky.

That's right, Louisville. Hoop dreams become a reality when individual players join forces to produce one great team. The 97-98 Viking Basketball team should be that type of squad.

Coach Barry Hamler has spent long hours preparing this group of new and returning Vikings for their championship run. Some of these players have never been on a championship squad. Others have never forgotten what it was like to hop up on a teammates shoulders and cut the strings down from the baskets.

This year's Vikings may be the best balance of players and skill available to the university in recent time. I'm sure you thought last year's team was the one. It was a fine team, but this one is more "home grown" in terms of representing greater purity in defining "Barryball." Barry Hamler's winning attitude is carefully developed to produce winners.

The program begins with a focus on responsibility for one's self off the court and a continuous dedication to improvement of knowledge and skills on the court. It is a results driven system which leads to success through hard work and commitment. The players understand their roles and the coach motivates them to seek their full potential.

This year the Viking lineup returns three starters. The returnees are All-American candidate Anthony Harris (a preseason pick), Marcus Riddick, an all conference rookie last year and Ryan Taylor whose three-point shooting made him one of the most feared shoot-

ing guards in the CIAA. Another player in this group is Herb Lewis, who Hamler will go to for help with his starting lineup. Lewis adds a combination of defense, scoring, and rebounding.

Hamler also has a strong bench to go to for extra help when a player needs a breather. He, and the rest of the coaching staff, realizes that it takes more than five or six players to compete for a national championship season. Anything less than a CIAA championship would be unacceptable for this team.

But success at the conference level is just the beginning. After the CIAA, you have the South-Atlantic Regional, and then finally the Elite Eight teams meet to decide who will be the National Champions. Last year the Vikings got a taste of what that feast could be like. This year they intend to devour all opponents in order to get their fill of it.

The Vikings are ranked 7th in the nation, according to the Sporting News College Basketball Preview 97-98, and with the added attention comes added responsibility of performance. In order to prove their worthiness they will have to endure a 30-game regular season which spans a period of about five months.

To appreciate the commitment the young men playing must travel two or three days per week while maintaining GPAs above the 2.5 mark. Whether these Vikings win a CIAA crown or soar to the top of the Chancellor's List, Coach Barry Hamler has this group of Vikings poised for success this year. For some players "Barryball" may seem tough, but for most the reward of a national championship far exceed any other alternative.



Cheerleader Nicole Hoffler looks determined during the Homecoming game against Bowie State. A junior Computer Science major, she is a member of the Honors Program.

Mark Brown photo