

Members of the Viking cheerleaders team pump up the crowd during the Homecoming game against Bowie State.

Mark Brown photo

New players lined up to replace Vike seniors

by Al Randolph

Despite the loss of some key seniors, Coach Barry Hamler is hopeful that the Vikings can repeat last year's achievement.

The Vikings (22-7) went 14-3 in the Central Intercollegiate Athletic Association, then won the South Atlantic Regional to advance to the NCAA Division II tournament, where they were defeated by Salem Teikyo 91-74.

The Vikings followed their two senior leaders Adrian Bell and Maurice Mincey. Bell, the coach on the floor at the point position and Mincey, the inside and outside threat at the forward position will truly be missed this season.

"The team will be affected by the loss in ball-handling and scoring," said Hamler.

With key returners Marcus Riddick, Anthony Harris, Ryan Taylor and Herb Lewis, Coach Hamler is ready to make another run at the Northern Division of the CIAA and the Division II National Title.

Hamler said he will depend on two of the players, Hines and Taylor, for work on the back court. Hines, who comes to ECSU from Gulf Coast Community College, was ranked fifth best junior college point guard in the nation, according to Hamler.

This year seven new players will be lined up to replace the last year's seniors. The new players are Curtis Cofield, Derrick Hines, Jabari Holder, Kelsey Wilkins, Aaron Wilkins (no re-

lation to Kelsey), Bradley Smith, and Stephon Newton.

In a recent interview, Hamler had high praise for his new players.

"Curtis Cofield is very aggressive," said Hamler. "He will be a valuable addition to the team." Cofield is a six-foot four-inch sophomore forward from Williamston, NC.

Hamler described Hines, a 5-foot nine-inch junior guard from Roanoke, Va. as "an exciting and one-of-a-kind player," who could have attended UCLA or Syracuse but who decided to attend ECSU instead.

Jabari Holder is a six-foot, five-inch freshman forward from Greenbush, New York.

"Jabari is a very explosive freshman player and I'm sure he will have a bright future at ECSU."

Hamler said Kelsey Wilkins, a five-foot eleven inch sophomore guard from Durham, N.C., is a "two-sport athlete with a great deal of talent."

Aaron Wilkins is a 6-foot, four-inch freshman guard from Plymouth, N.C.

"He is local product who will bring stability to the program," said Hamler. "He comes from a tradition of basketball."

Bradley Smith is a six-foot, three-inch sophomore guard, from Currituck, N.C.

"Bradley is the first recruit from Currituck High School, and is very excited about his first year playing."

Stephen Newton, a five-foot nine-

inch sophomore guard from Orange, New Jersey, "comes from a nice high school program and he will help the program out a great deal," said Hamler.

Derrick Hines, who will replace the four-year starting point guard Adrian Bell, said he felt "comfortable at ECSU." Added Hines: "The chemistry of the team is very good. I hope to get everyone involved and score."

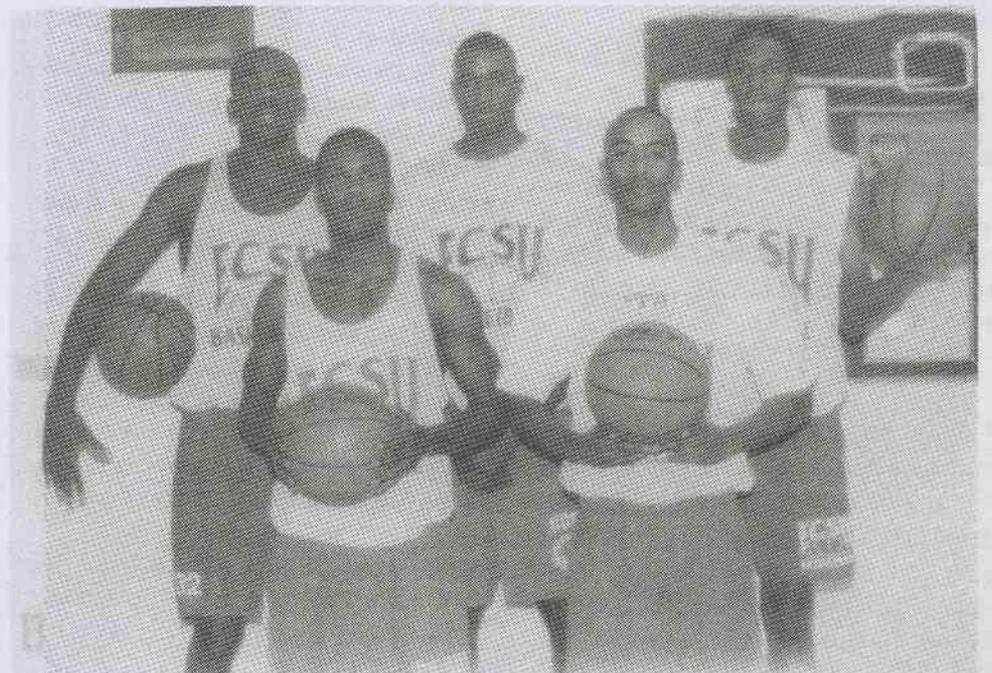
Hamler said he wasn't paying attention to his team's No. 7 ranking in The Sporting News College Basketball Preview.

"Where you finish, not where you start—that's what it's all about," Hamler said.

The Vikings were 2-2 after their 74-72 loss to the University of the District of Columbia on Oct. 25.

Hamler said the Vikes are still trying to get used to playing together.

"We're really happy where we are at this part of the season," he said. "We know we've got a lot of work to do, but there's no reason why we shouldn't be where we want to be at the end of the season."



Mark Brown photo

Coach Hamler will rely on these starters during the 1997-98 season. They are (back row) Anthony Harris, Xaviar Wise and Marcus Riddick. Front row: Derrick Hines and Ryan Taylor.