

Lady Vikes finish 3rd in CIAA's E. Division

by Jemayne King

Despite the lady Viking's Feb. 23 loss to St. Augustine's Lady Falcons in the first round of the CIAA tournament, hard work and dedication helped turn the women's basketball program at ECSU around this year.

Last season the lady Vikes finished (9-19). This season the Vikes finished third in the CIAA Eastern Division (13-14).

The Lady Falcons defeated the Vikings 75-58.

Coach Vanessa Taylor credited much of the team's success to the efforts of freshmen players like Raquita Washington and Kristi Zeigler. These two young ladies gave the lady Vikes a much needed shot in the arm, Taylor said.

Both Washington and Zeigler averaged double figures in scoring this season.

Out of the 15-member team there were eight freshmen, three sophomores, two juniors, and one senior.

"This season we had an extremely young team with exceptional guard play," said veteran Viking Lakeera Payne. "Even though our team lacked size, the post players that we incorporated did a good job on the boards."

Although the Lady Vikings were undersized this year, the team has shown strong pressure defense. In a Jan. 6 meeting with Shaw University, the Lady Vike's special brand of pressure defense produced a 64-61 win. At that point in the season Shaw was unbeaten.

The Vikes' stellar defense also was a main factor in a Feb. 10 win over North Carolina Central University (60-54).

The Vikes' strong defense hasn't always been enough to win games.

The Lady Vikings shot only 35 percent in a February loss to St. Augustine's Lady Falcons. St. Augustine's 42 percent shooting gave

them the game (86-83).

In an early season interview, Coach Taylor said the team had two primary challenges before them at this point in the season: motivation and morale.

"Our motivation has to be a challenge at this late portion of the season," Taylor added, "Having a good overall team morale is very important because we are about to go into the CIAA Tournament."

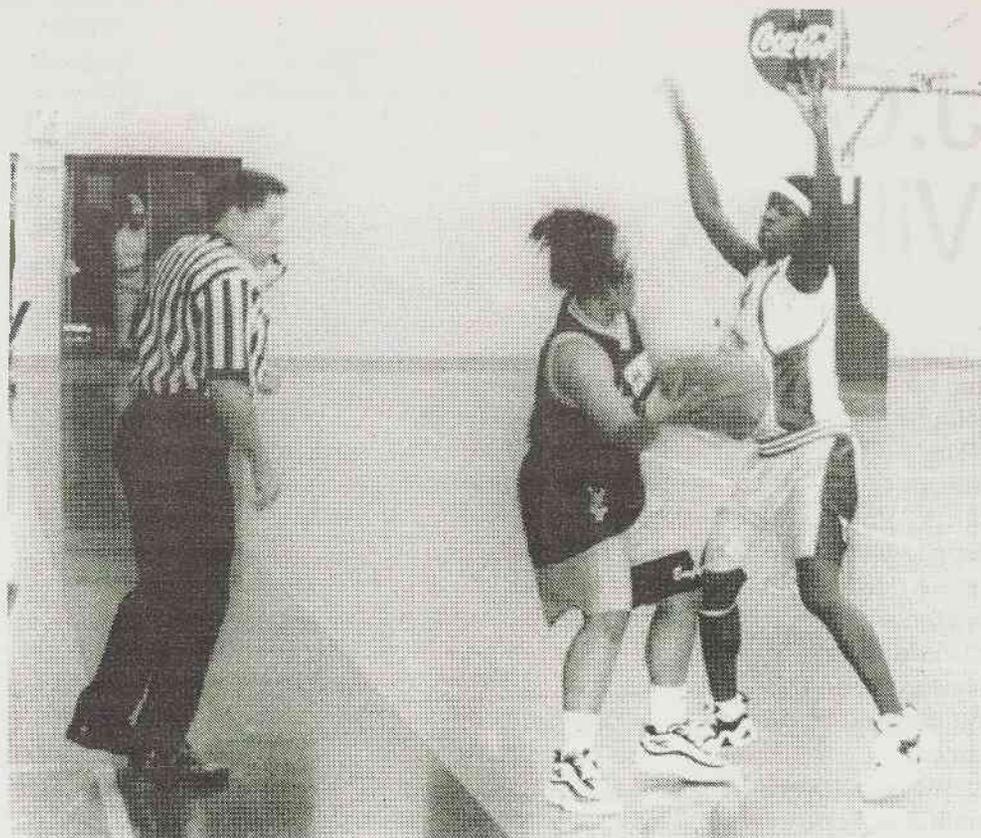
Team members admit that Taylor stresses the importance of hard work and individual effort. "Playing for Coach Taylor is a lot of hard work," said Danielle Virgil, a forward. "She expects a lot out of us."

The Lady Falcons had trouble keeping up with the quick Viking guards, but St. Augustine used its size advantage on the insides, especially on the boards.

The lady Falcons out rebounded ECSU 53-41 and scored on a number of second-chance opportunities.

One player from the Falcons, Anastacia Sands, paced the Falcons with 20 points, 15 rebounds and 2 block shots. Donita Mays added 17 points and Torsheka Cox added 12 points.

CIAA rookie of the year Raquita Washington was not intimidated by playing in her first CIAA Tournament game. Leading the Lady Viking with



Franklin Scott, Jr. photo

Viking Danielle Virgil traps a small forward in the Feb. 10 game against N.C. Central. The Lady Vikings won, 60-54.

18 points, five rebounds and five steals.

Kristy Zeigler added 16 points, and Sherrie Forrest added 12 points.

After seeing a 10-point lead shrink to two points at halftime, the lady Falcons', the no. 5 seed out of the Western Division, used an 18-6 run at the midway point of the second half to put away the Lady Vikings, the no. 4 seed out of the Eastern division.

Washington was one of several freshmen Taylor depended on this season. The five-foot three-inch guard from Norfolk, Va. led all freshmen in scor-

ing, with 14.8 points per contest. She ranked eighth overall in free throw shooting percentage, (.699) and was 14th in steals, (2.38).

The CIAA coaches selected Taylor as CIAA Coach of the Year.

ECSU only returned one starter this season, and sports writers predicted them to end up finish near the bottom.

Taylor, in her 4th year at ECSU, brought the team back to contention.

The Moutrie, Ga. native and graduate of Tuskegee Institute has an overall record of 45-69.

Cullens pins hopes for winning season on new crop of talent

by Al Randolph

Vikings Baseball Coach Chuck Cullens hopes some talented new team members will help produce a winning season.

Last season's (7-23) record resulted from weaknesses in the pitching and the inability to recruit talented players, said Cullens.

"With the team speed and experience on the pitcher's mound, the defense status has to improve this season," said Cullens.

Kelsey Wilkins, Jason Parrish and Justin Burk are all in the rotation, said Cullens. Wilkins, a returning righthander, is the spotlight on defense.

Kelsey, a junior, said this year's team is a lot better due to "the young guys coming in and the improvements on defense. If the team comes together and everybody puts Jesus first, success is a must."

Kelsey defines "success" as a shot at the CIAA title."

Cullens described another returning player, sophomore Alvin Keels,

as "a player to watch." Keels "knows the game and to have the success he's had in the Valley Player League at a young age, that says a lot about him," said Cullens.

Other newcomers include Cory Miller, a Pitt Community College transfer. "Miller is a freshman third baseman with good speed," said Cullens. "He's a left-handed hitter." Miller is a graduate of Hertford County High School.

Kosbenky Perez, a freshman first and third baseman, is a "power hitter from New Jersey," said Cullens. He is also a football recruit.

Another newcomer is Ken Simmons, "a very talented freshman at the short-stop position, from Currituck High," said Cullens.

Toby Lewis, of Elizabeth City, is a freshman catcher and good hitter "who will improve as the season goes on," according to Cullens.

Cullens also mentioned Johnny Fuller, of Currituck County, Jason Watson, a junior transfer from Mount Olive Community College, and Tracy Askew, a freshman from Hertford County.

Cullens described Askew as "an outfielder with amazing speed. His work ethic will carry him far in his first year of playing."

The Vikes opened up against Christopher Newport for some non-conference play to start the season. A large number of errors cost them the game (15-3).

The Vikes lost to Chowan College 12-5. The Feb. 26 game was played at Chowan College, in Murfreesboro, N.C.

Viking Baseball Schedule, 1998

March

- 5 St. Augustine's--Raleigh, N.C. 1 p.m.
- 17 Virginia State--Petersburg, Va. 1 p.m.
- 20 St. Paul's--Elizabeth City, N.C. 1 p.m.
- 22 Virginia State--Elizabeth City, N.C. 1 p.m.
- 26 St. Augustine's--Elizabeth City, N.C. 1 p.m.
- 28 Shaw--Raleigh, N.C. 1 p.m.

April

- 1 St. Paul's--Lawrenceville, Va. 1 p.m.
- 5 Bowie State--Bowie Md. 1 p.m.
- 8 Shaw--Elizabeth City, N.C. 1 p.m.
- 10 Bowie State--Elizabeth, N.C. 1 p.m.

16-18 CIAA Tournament, Fayetteville, N.C. TBA