

Vikes prepared for CIAA Tournament

by Jemayne King

Ah, it's spring again—a sure harbinger of short shorts, open-toed shoes, and the sound of metallic bats ringing out from the Knobs Creek playing field.

This season, Viking Coach Chuck Cullens plans to tighten up the way his players use those bats.

"We were right in the thick of things before we went into a five-game slump," said Cullens. "Our current goal is to try and get out of this hitting slump and get mentally prepared for the CIAA tournament which is in Fayetteville, NC April 16-18th.

The Vikings are (7-16) and (7-11) in the CIAA.

Cullens, currently in his 12th season as head coach of the ECSU baseball program, has a fundamentally sound team with a fairly young nucleus.

"Players such as Johnny Fuller and Alvin Keels have been pleasant surprises," said Cullens. "In a game yesterday (April 8th) against Shaw University Alvin had four home runs.

"Johnny broke his foot in a freak accident last fall, and didn't have an opportunity to really prepare for the upcoming season," Cullens added "Currently he is (4-2) and is one of the better pitchers on our entire staff.

According to Cullens the Vikes' five-game losing streak is due mainly to their inability to hit effectively.

"Hitting is an area in which we have to improve on with the CIAA tournament so close," said Cullens. "This year it's anybody's tournament. I think this is the most equal division I've seen in

twelve years!"

Coach Cullens is also a student of the game that stresses sound fundamentals.

"I feel that if we concentrate on the four aspects of pitching, hitting, defense, and smart base running we stand a good chance of staying in every ball game."

Cullens said he is appreciative of fan support.

"We have a pretty good following considering we don't play on campus," he said. "I've also noticed that we bring in more fans on an average than do other CIAA schools. A lot of our fans are students who make the drive over—parents, grandparents and girlfriends.

Cullens thinks this season will help prepare the younger team members for the future.

"We will continue to look for kids to improve," said Cullens. "The underclassmen who get in (the game) will be receiving invaluable time under their belts."

Last season the Vikings finished (7-23).

The CIAA tournament will test the Vikings' ability to finish out the season successfully. Coach Cullens stressed that to win the tournament the pitching must hold up and the Vikings must improve offensively.

He pointed out that his team is tough to beat when hitting, but added, "the team that comes in hot offensively and defensively can win the tournament".

(Al Randolph contributed to this story.)



Franklin Scott, Jr. photo

Catcher Phoebe Eley puts out a Bowie State player at home plate.

Anthony Harris makes All-Star Classic Team

by Jemayne King

Spike Lee's new basketball movie *He Got Game* hits theaters later this month. Elizabeth City State's own work-in-progress, Anthony Harris, has been hitting the CIAA for the past four seasons, averaging 17.7 points and 9.0 rebounds a game in his senior contest. It may be safe to say "He got game, too."

Harris' performance has helped him join an elite group of athletes. He is one of 24 top seniors in the country from Historically Black Colleges and Universities to be selected to play in the Black College All-Star Basketball Classic. The Classic is set for April 18 at the Baltimore Arena.

"It feels pretty good to be selected," said Harris, a senior who graduated from high school in Columbia, N.C. "I'll get a chance to play with players from other conferences, and maybe get a chance to get looked at by pro scouts."

"I want to play in the NBA," he said. "It would be nice if it happens, I'm going to work hard at it."

Harris, a forward for the Vikings, credits much of his success to a strong family background.

"I looked up to my mother and patterned my game after my older brother," he says. "He influenced me by bringing home trophies. He really worked hard."

Despite his success, Harris strives to improve his game on a daily basis.

"I would like to improve my outside game, catching the ball outside and making something happen. I love to work I don't want to be outplayed. I just want to work and be ready."

Harris admits that it's not easy to

juggle the demands of academics and athletics.

"It takes a little bit of concentration and a lot of hard work," he said.

"You have to remember what you came here for and you have to remember where you are trying to get (to.)"

Harris said he has not been turned off by the new era of professional basketball, with its emphasis on flash over substance.

"I don't think the NBA is conveying a negative image," he said. "It's just a different breed of athletes coming in now. The game is changing, but not necessarily changing in a negative direction."

Harris sees no problem with the NBA's current drug policy. The NBA is the only professional sports league that doesn't have mandatory drug tests.

"If they (The NBA) don't have people running down the court passing out, and they don't have problems with people getting arrested constantly, maybe they are doing the right thing," he said.

When Harris is not busy studying or honing his game he likes to relax by writing poetry and listening to music.

"I'll write a little bit of poetry, maybe listen to little bit of Stevie(Wonder)."

In commenting on this season's Viking record Harris said he believes the team "accomplished a lot."

Was he disappointed by the Vikes' inability to bring home the CIAA championship this year?

"I'm not disappointed at all," he said. "The fellows will have other chances. I'm the one who doesn't. Good luck to 'em."

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