

SPORTS REVIEW

A Living Legend At WSSU

By Eugenia C. Williamson

There's a legend in the City of Winston-Salem and it's not the mayor nor is it the chief of police. The legend is a basketball coach at Winston-Salem State University named Clarence E. "Bighouse" Gaines, a native of Paducah, Kentucky.

Yes, Coach Gaines is definitely a legend to fellow Rams, Alumni, friends and fans. On January 24, 1990, Gaines and his team was victorious in Salisbury, against Livingstone College with a score of 79-70.

As the clock slowly ticked down to the last few seconds, the big man awaited his victory. He was presented a plaque for his 800th win and as a cool gift, a bucket of ice was dumped on him by his players. Gaines said that the victory felt great; but the pressure was still on because he was trying to win the CIAA Southern Division. (North Carolina Central University, won the divisional championship title.)

Though he was credited with his 800th win in Salisbury, Ram fans wanted to celebrate in Ram Land. On January 29, 1990, the Ram family and fans had "Bighouse" Gaines Day. At 7:30 p.m., in the C.E. Gaines Complex, the WSSU Rams hosted the Fayetteville State Broncos. Before the tip-off, the "living legend" was honored with a ceremony. As Coach Gaines and his wife, Clara, entered the gymnasium, the crowd of about 2,515 people rose to their feet and applauded with great enthusiasm. He is the second coach to hit the 800 mark at a four year college. The late Adolph Rupp, won 875 games in 41 seasons at the University of Kentucky.

Coach Al Roseboro, who served as master of ceremony, commented on how Gaines has become a "living legend" He also read a letter from the Governor of Kentucky, Wallace G. Wilkerson. Special guests, the Student Government Association, faculty and staff congratulated Gaines with flowers, gifts, a jersey with



WSSU's "Living Legend" Photo By: Tuttle

his name and the number 800 on the back and numerous plaques. The game ball from the Livingstone victory will be given to the Naismith Hall of Fame in Springfield, Mass.

Winston-Salem Mayor Martha Wood, read a proclamation that made "Gaines Day" official. At the end of her speech, with a grin on her face, she stated "Make no mistake about it, everyday is "Bighouse" Gaines Day at Winston-Salem State University."

Chancellor Cleon Thompson also presented a plaque along with a set of golf clubs. He concluded his speech by saying, "There's only one thing that he needs practice on," (he then presented the clubs), "Then go to work."

CIAA Commissioner Leon Perry, confirmed that January 29th will be "Gaines Day" throughout

the conference.

After the giving and receiving ended, Gaines thanked everyone for their time and support. He then wanted to proceed with the game and said, "Now let's get on to business and see if we can't get No. 802."

John A. Little, sophomore, from Schenectady, NY, was asked how did he like the celebration? He responded by saying that the celebration was very nice; but he felt that a man who has accomplished such a great achievement, deserves a lot more. What about Gaines' future? "I wish him the best in his quest for 875 (health permitting) and most of all, I'm glad that I was apart of No. 800," he said.

Marc C. Turner, sophomore, from Westchester County, NY, a member of the team, feels that his time spent with Gaines has been

quite rewarding. "Since Gaines has been around basketball so long, he has brought a lot into the game itself," states Turner. "The coach is straight up with everyone and his concerns for the players is emphasized on and off the court."

So what drives the big man, and who, or what keeps him going? Gaines stated that he likes watching the youth progress. He also receives calls from graduates and that keeps him going too. The main person that drives him is his wife, Clara, who makes him strive for perfection.

Vanessa M. Hood, director of Residence Life, feels that Gaines' achievements set the stage for future goals and accomplishments at WSSU. She feels that more students will want to come to WSSU to see or play for a legend such as Gaines. She adds that the victory puts the university on a national level and having him in association with WSSU is indeed a plus. What about Gaines' future? It looks promising but I don't want to think of him retiring," responded Hood.

The Rams whipped the Broncos by a score of 85-71. Toby Barber was the player of the game. He snatched 24 rebounds and hit 18 points.

This is an outstanding accomplishment for a man who was going to be a dentist before arriving in Winston-Salem in 1945. WSSU has been touched with a celebrity whose fame will definitely become a part of history. CONGRATULATIONS COACH GAINES!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

