

# WSSU Rams and N.C. A&T Aggies renew football rivalry

COURTESY OF WSSU ATHLETIC DEPARTMENT

Greensboro

It seemed almost incomprehensible that two historically black universities located 25 miles apart are not on each other's schedule. Consider the problem solved. North Carolina A&T and Winston-Salem State will renew their football rivalry on Sept. 2, 2006 when the Rams travel to Aggie Stadium next season. A formal announcement was made October 5 at a press conference in the Bryan Fitness and Wellness' Multipurpose Room.

The teams have met 42 times over a span of 60 years, with the Aggies holding a 33-9 edge in the series. Six seasons have passed since the last time these teams met, when the Aggies took a 20-7 victory over the Rams en route to the MEAC Championship. "We are very pleased to welcome the WSSU Rams

to N.C. A&T today," said Aggie athletics director Dee Todd, an WSSU alumni. "It is time we bring back a rival that has meant so much to this community. For many years, this game was a staple on our schedule, and with WSSU joining the MEAC, the teams will play again."

Before the series ended in 1999, the Aggies and the Rams played each other 23 straight times from 1977-99.

The rivalry extends to the current coaching staff of the football teams. WSSU head coach Kermit Blount played against N.C. A&T head coach George Small in the late '70s. Blount's teams beat the Aggies in 1977 and 1978.

"It's going to be fun facing Kermit as a coach," said Small, who played defensive line when Blount was the quarterback at WSSU. "I know what it is like to face him as a player and that was



Photo by Garrett Garms

The Rams are looking forward to continuing the rivalry with the Aggies.

hard enough. He was quick. So I'm looking forward to see what it's like to face him as a coach."

Other great players from both teams have participated in the rivalry. WSSU wide receiver

Yancey Thigpen played in two Super Bowls, went to two Pro Bowls and helped the Rams to two wins over

N.C. A&T. Pro Football Hall of Famer Elvin Bethea played in the series in the '60s and never lost to the Rams.

Winston-Salem State has already made its formal application to become the 12th school to join the MEAC and will be eligible for championships in 2010. The Rams played against MEAC members Howard and S.C. State in its 2005 football schedule.

"There is no more speculation," said WSSU Athletics Director Dr. Percy Caldwell. "We will be a Division I team, so the future of this rivalry looks promising."

The game is sure to have a positive impact on the Triad area. The average attendance of the game was 18,191 in the 1990s. At Aggie Stadium, the average attendance was 16,510 during that decade, while at Bowman Gray Stadium, the home of the Rams, the average attendance was 19,972.

## Rams on a winning streak

By Steven Gaither  
ARGUS SPORTS EDITOR

After stumbling in the dark for a few weeks, the Winston-Salem State offense finally has finally found the on-switch. After scoring only two offensive touchdowns while starting 0-3, the Rams have found their stride, winning three straight games as of Oct. 6 to improve their record to 3-3 overall and 3-0 in the CIAA. With wins over the Vikings of Elizabeth City State University (ECSU), the Panthers of Virginia Union University (VUU) and the Broncos of Fayetteville State University (FSU), the Rams are tied with St. Augustine College (6-0, 3-0 CIAA) for first place in the CIAA's Western Division.

On September 17, the Rams returned to Bowman-Gray Stadium with a 0-3 record after losing to Catawba, Howard and South Carolina State. The Vikings of ECSU struck first, with an assist from the Rams, as cornerback Paul Crews intercepted a Monte Purvis pass and returned it 28 yards for a touchdown, giving the Vikings the early lead 7-0.

The Rams did not stay down for long, as cornerback Nathaniel Biggs recorded the first of his two interceptions of the day, halting an ECSU drive and giving the Rams the ball. Running back Martin Hicks finally shook off an early-season slump and responded with a 65-yard touchdown run, leaving a trail of Viking defenders in his dust and knotting the score up at 7-7. In the second quarter, the Rams passing game showed some signs of life as Purvis hooked up with wide out Brad Herring for a 35-yard touchdown pass — his first of the season, giving the Rams a 14-7 lead. The Vikings answered with a 55-yard touchdown scamper by running back Dennis Hamilton to bring the score to 14-14 going into the half.

As the second half opened up, the Rams gave the Vikings another dose of Hicks, as the senior broke open another touchdown run, this time from 40 yards out to give the Rams a 21-14 lead with 10:24 remaining in the third. ECSU's Dennis Hamilton responded with a touchdown of his own.

However, it was the next play that ended up being the most significant in the game. WSSU's Levern Bynum blocked the extra point that would have tied the game at 21, leaving the Vikings down 21-20 with little more than nine minutes left in the third quarter.

For the rest of the third and most of the fourth quarter, the game turned into a defensive battle until the Vikings drove down the field and hit a field goal to give them a 23-21 lead with four minutes remaining.

Rams quarterback Monte Purvis may be in his first year as a starter for the Rams, but in crunch time he looked like a seasoned vet as he completed four of five passes and lead the Rams on a 79-yard drive, setting up kicker Matt Hind for the 20-yard, game-winning field goal.

Rams fans breathed a sigh of relief, as the field goal was good and the Rams won 24-21, finishing off a dramatic game and giving the Rams their first taste of victory in 2005. Hind (1-1 FG, 3-3 Pats) and Hicks

(153 yards, 2 touchdowns) were named CIAA players of the week.

The Rams traveled to Richmond, Va., to play the Panthers of Virginia Union. It was a homecoming for WSSU coach Kermit Blount, a native of Richmond, and the Rams seemed right at home as well.

Neither offense was able to put points on the board in the first quarter, but from then on it was all WSSU. The Rams exploded for 20 second-quarter points, courtesy of Martin Hicks, who finished the day with 203 yards, one shy of his career-high. Hicks weaved his way through the Panther defense for touchdown runs of 37, five and 42 yards.

The Rams went into half-time with a 20-0 lead and never looked back.

Early in the fourth quarter, Monte Purvis hit wide out Brad Herring for a 26-yard touchdown and after the two-point conversion the Rams led 28-0.

Kicker Matt Hind again finished the day with 20-yard field goal, but this time the game was well in hand, as the much-improved Ram defense scored its first shut out of

the season, with the Rams blowing out the Panthers 31-0.

With the Rams riding high after consecutive victories, they traveled to Fayetteville to face the rival Broncos. Preseason polls had predicted the Rams would finish behind the Broncos in the division this season, and the Rams had not beaten FSU since 2001, so WSSU definitely had something to prove.

On the first play from scrimmage, Hicks ran the ball 36 yards but coughed up the ball and gave the ball back to the Broncos, who took advantage of the turnover with a four-yard touchdown run, giving them a 7-0 lead. The resilient Rams bounced back, however, as Purvis eluded the Bronco defense for a 55-yard touchdown run, tying the game 7-7 with less than five minutes left in the first quarter. In the second quarter the Broncos hit a field goal to take a 10-7 lead. The second quarter again proved to be a charm for Hicks, who recorded two (12, four yard) touchdowns in the period and after a blocked field goal the Rams took a 20-7.

Hick's backfield partner Jed Bines returned to the line-up for the Rams after missing the game against VUU because of an ankle injury. "I really felt I had to make up for last week," said the junior, who carried the ball 24 times for 180 yards. Hicks went over 100 yards for the third consecutive game, finishing with 131-yards on 23 carries. The rushing game as well as kicker, Matt Hind, proved to be huge for the Rams in the fourth quarter as the Rams came back from a 24-20 deficit in the final 10 minutes courtesy of two field goals by Matt Hind, including a game winning 26-yard field goal with two seconds remaining, giving the Rams their third straight win. It was the second time in three games that Matt Hind was called on to win the game for the Rams. "Everybody is working together, doing their parts, and that is all it takes, that teamwork, and we can continue to keep getting better and keep winning."

Information in this story was also contributed by [www.wssurams.com](http://www.wssurams.com).

## 'NBA Live '06' gives player more control

By Steven Gaither  
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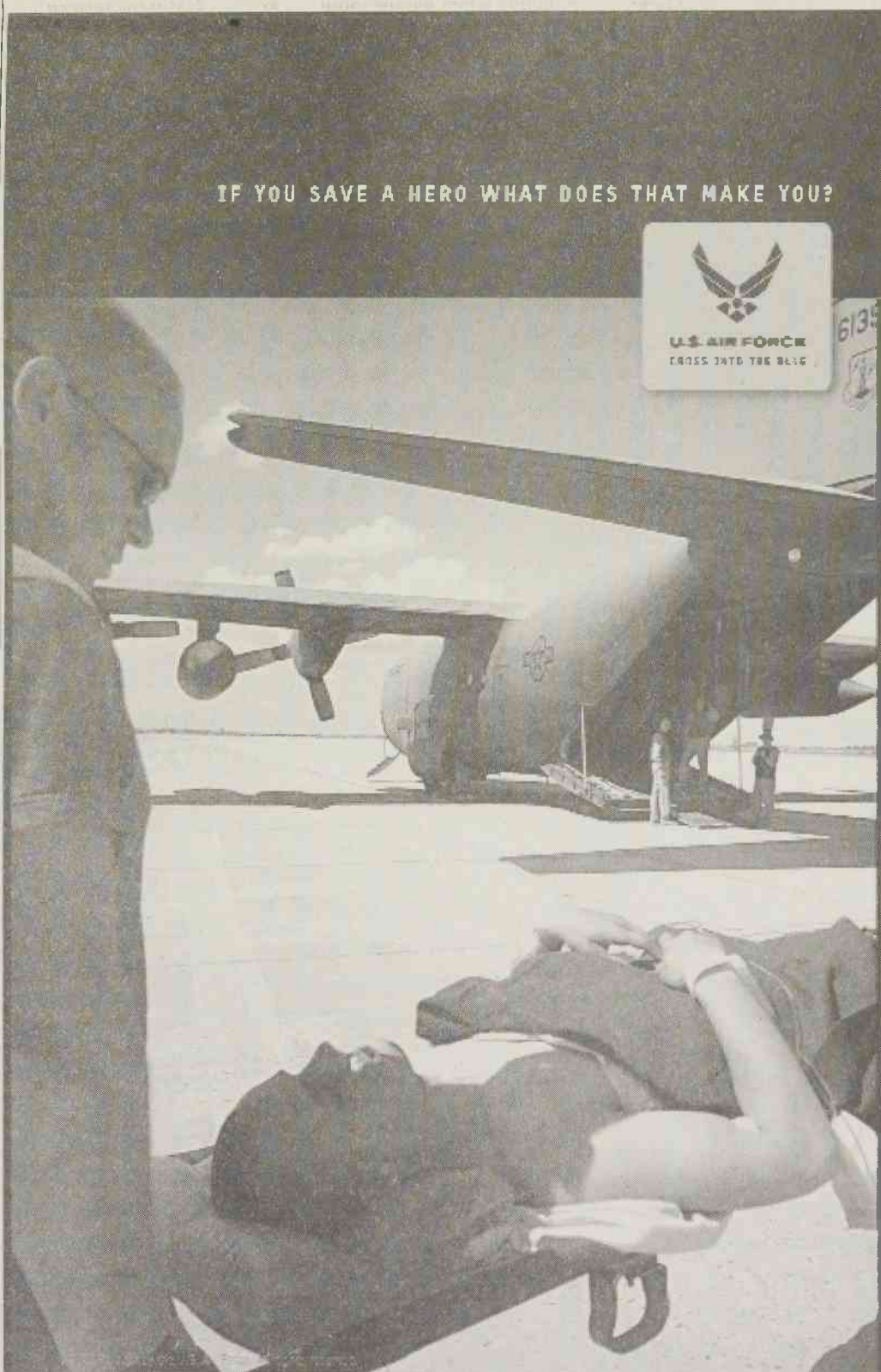
Ever imagine that you're a NBA superstar, hitting the shot that leads your team to a title championship? Virtual reality in the form of "NBA Live 06" now lets you get close to that imagined shot.

Newly released and available for Playstation 2, X-Box, Nintendo Gamecube and Pcs, "NBA Live 06" has an updated feature, Freestyle Superstars, that allows players to choose their favorite players and the moves that the NBA players use on the court. For example, Gary Payton no longer does the same dunks as Vince Carter. There are Playmakers, Shooters, Scorers (inside and

out), High-Flyers, Power players and defensive Stoppers (inside and out).

Along with the new feature are all of the Live favorites: Exhibition, All-Star Weekend (Including the Slam Dunk Contest) and Dynasty Mode. In Dynasty Mode you take total control of your franchise, including hiring assistant coaches and training and scouting players.

The graphics in this year's Live are much better. The gameplay is also much smoother. The commentary can be insightful at times, and other times it can be just annoying. All things considered, "NBA Live 06" is one of the best basketball games ever and maybe the greatest sports game of all-time.



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