

SPORTS

Rivalry between Rams and Aggies intense as ever

Larry Williams
NEWS ARGUS STAFF REPORTER

On September 2nd a rivalry was renewed, and although there was lack of competition on the field, it was alive and well in the stands.

"Of course this is still a rivalry, just ask the A&T alumni who were sitting on the WSSU side, angry and trying to start trouble," says Christa Logan, a junior at WSSU. In front of more than 21,000 screaming passionate fans, WSSU served notice to N.C. A&T and the rest of the MEAC conference that they're not to be taken lightly. The Rams used a powerful running game and strong defense to crush their I-40 brethren 41-14 and leave most of the stadium red by the time it was over.

To get a feel for the magnitude of this rivalry, just picture N.C. State not playing UNC for about seven years. The emotion, pageantry and passion were all on display after being bottled up for so long. There was plenty of trash talking between generations, families and friends of the two historically black colleges separated by less than 30 miles. The feelings have been bubbling on the surface since the date was announced a year ago.

The intensity and anticipation was evident the minute anyone stepped onto the grounds of Aggie Stadium. One glance over the parking lot (or tailgating central) before the game and you might have seen several older gentlemen wearing worn and aged A&T hats. Not too far

away, one might also see current students; one male with a new Aggie fitted cap or a young female with a WSSU shirt and bag.

If the stands could speak, there would be endless stories to tell. The lines between red and blue were very distinct except for a few patches of blue and red mixed in the middle. "It's definitely a true rivalry. There was a whole lot of school spirit on each side." Tracey Bowen, a junior, said.

The close proximity of these two universities and their supporters ensures this rivalry will be healthy and strong for a long time to come. As Christa Logan said, "This rivalry will last a long time because [A&T] will be focused on getting us back for awhile."

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Bobby Collins, new Ram basketball head coach preaches patience and hard work

Steven J. Gaither
NEWS ARGUS SPORTS EDITOR

Before he uttered a word, the smile on Bobby Collins' face let everyone know how he felt about being a Ram. "I am extremely excited," said Collins, who was named head coach of Ram basketball Sept. 5. He is the seventh basketball coach in WSSU history.

Collins is already making history at WSSU, as he will be the man to lead the Rams into the Mid-Eastern Athletic Conference and NCAA Division I. Collins has experienced the transition from Division II to Division I with the Hampton University Pirates as an assistant coach in 1995. Collins acknowledged that while it will not be easy to recruit players during the transition because of restrictions (WSSU cannot participate in the MEAC or NCAA tournaments until 2011) he is confident that he can get the job done.

"I had success recruiting during the transition (to Division I) and I think it can be done," he said.

Collins displayed optimism in his first press conference as head coach of the Rams. When asked about the hardships that may lie ahead for the team he made sure that the positives of the transition were discussed as well.

"Our kids will get a lot of exposure (as a result of moving to Division I)," said Collins, a North Carolina native.

Collins' success with the Pirates during their transition and his coaching experience played a role in him being selected.

"He was an assistant coach at Hampton when the Pirates moved to Division 1, and he was also part of the coaching staff that upset the Big 12 champion Iowa State Cyclones in the (2001) NCAA Tournament," said WSSU Director of Athletics, Dr. Chico Caldwell.

The youngest of 10 children, Collins played his college ball at Eastern Kentucky University. He began his coaching career at Old Dominion in 1994. Collins served as head coach for Hampton from 2002-06, after working as an assistant coach for HU since 1995. Last season, he led the Pirates to the MEAC Championship. In 2002-03 he set a Hampton record for victories by a first-year coach with 19. Collins was named 2004 MEAC Coach of the Year, and his overall record was 65-57.

He succeeds Phillip Stitt as the Rams head coach after Stitt resigned last month.

Coach Collins said his coaching philosophy puts an emphasis on defense. "Offense wins games, but defense wins championships," he said. He went on to say that the three things he focuses on are attitude, class, and commitment.

"We are gonna play hard and compete," he said.

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