

Rams begin 2010 with strong January effort



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The Winston-Salem State men's basketball team began the 2009-2010 season below .500 with a 2-8 record in November and December.

The resolution: a turnaround resulting in a 5-3 January record.

The Rams bounced into the new year with a convincing 94-60 home win Jan. 4 over Washington Adventist University. The win ended a four-game losing skid for the Rams marking their second largest victory for the season.

Although the Rams fell six points short of 100 points, the 94 points tied for the most scored thus far. The Rams hit another milestone during the game snatching a season high 60 rebounds, including 15 from junior Paul Davis. Rams head coach Bobby Collins credited recent ACC competition for Davis's productivity.

"Paul has really been playing well and consistent for us and he's been doing some really good things," Collins said.

"It's been against the Marylands, the Georgia Techs, and the Wake Forests, those [types] of teams.

[He's] been playing pretty consistent."

After a heart-breaking 49-48 loss at Delaware State Jan. 9, the Rams responded with their first road win over Maryland Eastern Shore 75-70.

Freshman Marcus Wells led all WSSU scorers with 14 points. Sophomore Lamar Monger added 13 points and Davis tossed in 12 points as the three scorers in double figures.

The Rams went on to a two-game winning streak after a 55-42 defeat over Coppin State Jan. 16. Collins, the seventh head basketball coach in WSSU history, also captured a personal victory as WSSU Athletic Director Bill Hayes extended his head coaching contract for an additional three years through the 2012-2013 season.

"I am extremely excited about the decision that has been made. Mr. Hayes offered me three more years to coach the Rams and work with these young men," Collins said.

"I am grateful to be able to continue to be a part of this program, part of what we are building here. I am truly excited and my team is excited and now we can focus and concentrate on the games that we have at hand."

Collins is in his fourth season as the Rams head coach.

"I was very happy for him," said senior guard Brian Fisher, the Rams leading scorer averaging 11.3 points a game.

"My first year was also his first year so we have been with each other through all the trials and tribulations. And through [it all] I'm just happy that he stayed strong and persevered through it."

WSSU lost at home Jan. 18 to Morgan State 84-65, but bounced back to an 82-70 victory against Norfolk State Jan. 23.

One of the biggest wins of the season came when the Rams beat rival NC A&T by a final score of 59-57. WSSU came from a 14-point early deficit to capture the dramatic victory.

The Rams created 17 turnovers in the first half and held the Aggies to six points for more than 15 minutes of the first half. WSSU cut A&T's lead to 10 at halftime.

The second half started on a 19-7 run and the splurge mounted the Rams to their comeback with contributions from Fisher, Wells, as well as unsung hero junior Shelton Carter.

"If you were to look at our bench during their opening run we never panicked, even when they were up 14 points," Collins said in a post game interview.

"We didn't panic because I knew I had that ace, our bench.

"I knew that they were going to give me that energy. They [the bench] knew that something positive was going to happen.

"The Aggies shot the ball well, and I told our guys that it is a game of runs and we can bring them back to us with effort, and that is what the bench gave us."

The Rams finished January with a close 75-69 loss at Florida A&M, but still maintained a record over .500 for the month, including 4-1 in home games both at C.E. Gaines Center and Lawrence Joel Veterans Memorial Coliseum.

"I think the difference in our team has been the effort that this group is putting in," Fisher said.

"We made a commitment that no matter the outcome we will always play hard. For us to stay successful I think we have to stick to the things that we do which is playing harder, smarter, and more together than the other teams," Fisher said.

"Also our bench will have to continue to provide us with the energy they have been giving that has been winning these games for us."

Hayes brings new ideas to athletics

LaTasha Miles
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Since his hiring date of Nov. 3 as Winston-Salem State's athletic director, Bill Hayes has taken the athletic department by the horns at a non-stop pace.

Hayes, a former winning head football coach at WSSU has had other coaching successes at NC Central and NC A&T. He also went to Florida A&M and served as athletic director, before returning to WSSU facing several tasks at hand including fundraising and raising the academic bar for student-athletes.

"I think that this is a huge challenge," Hayes said.

"All of the pieces to the puzzle are here. I think that we have the opportunity to raise the necessary funds to have the kind of program that this community deserves. So I consider it a challenge and I look forward to it."

Hayes' early endeavors have included hiring the experienced Connell Maynor as head football coach, extending the contract of head basketball coach Bobby Collins for an additional three years, and initiating the "Academic Cookout" named in the honor of alum Dr. Reginald K. Sherard. The cookout is a sim-

ilar event that Hayes has done well with at previous schools in a way to improve the graduation retention and graduation rates.

Hayes said part of the process is putting as many personnel members and financial resources as possible to implement the concept.

"We're working really hard on that," Hayes said.

"We're trying to put some real structure to it and a strong system that will make sure that the proper counseling, academic monitoring and study hall supervision to try to improve these grades. That's very important to me and this staff."

Hayes emphasizes that the cookout is just a start and the process will be ongoing. He said that progress has been made and a lot more is in the works as the focus is the student-athletes and their accomplishments.

Part of the focus on the student-athletes is creating programs to generate funds for the athletic department from local businesses and boosters.

Hayes said that bonding with the University, the student-athletes, alumni and the community are parts of his administration that he has looked forward to, as well as

the fundraising side.

One of the programs, the "1,000 Horns Campaign," is a commitment from 1,000 alumni and friends from WSSU who will make a yearly contribution of \$1,000 to athletics. These donations will total \$1 million annually for the department and the funds will go towards scholarships.

Hayes said only 386 people gave back to WSSU last year.

"We're taking our fundraising efforts not just on the campus," Hayes said.

"We have to put butts in seats. We have to arouse people and give them incentive to want to see what we're doing over here because not enough people are interested. We have to take our show on the road."

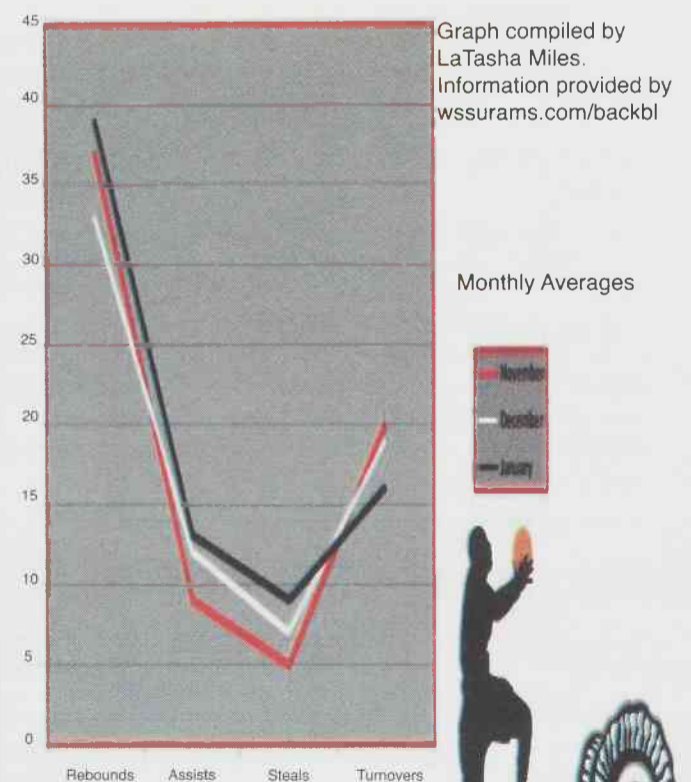
Hayes is also interested in expanding the athletic department into fields such as soccer and women's golf.

"Athletics is a window to a university," Hayes said.

"That's what students are interested in and that creates opportunities.

We have all types of activities planned from banquets to breakfasts, pep rallies, and dinners. We have to revitalize this department. We have a lot more to do, but altogether as a team, we will be successful."

WSSU MEN'S BASKETBALL STATS NOVEMBER 2009 - JANUARY 2010



After a 2-8 start in November and December, the Winston-Salem State men's basketball team improved to a 5-3 record in January. The Rams improved in many statistical categories, increasing their total of wins, rebounds, steals and assists, while decreasing their turnovers.

The difference is these stats are a primary reason for the Rams turn around in 2010.

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