

## Rams exit MEAC with strong promise for return to CIAA

The Rams 2009-2010 basketball season will leave a lasting impression as Winston-Salem State exits Division I and the Mid-Eastern Atlantic Conference play.



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SPORTS EDITOR

WSSU began with a 0-3 start in Eugene, Ore. at the BTI Tournament Tip-Off in mid-November, but bounced back winning two of their next three games at home. The Rams defeated Atlanta Christian 94-57 Nov. 20 and Milligan 85-59 Nov. 30. The 76-52 loss came from Atlantic Coast Conference powerhouse Wake Forest Nov. 24.

During the win over Atlanta Christian, the Rams recorded 12 scorers, five in double-digits, and three with double-doubles. By halftime, 10 of the 12 players to score had put points on the board.

Junior Shelton Carter scored 17 points and snatched 10 rebounds. Junior Paul Davis added 13 points and 11 rebounds, as junior McIntoch

Alcius tossed in 10 points and led the Rams in rebounds with 12. The contributions from the trio were the first time in five years that three WSSU players contributed a double-double.

Senior Brian Fisher also added a personal mark to his collegiate resume earning his 1,000th point in the 37-point victory.

After a four-game skid in December, including losses to other ACC heavyweights, Maryland and Georgia Tech, both on the road, and a 63-60 defeat by South Carolina State, WSSU responded by winning five of their next seven games. The victories were over Washington Adventist, Maryland Eastern Shore, Coppin State, Norfolk State, and NC A&T all in January.

The number of points in the win over Washington Adventist tied for the most scored in the season, while the victory over Maryland Eastern Shore Jan. 11 was the first on the road for the Rams.

WSSU had an opportunity to capture their first road win of the season when facing Delaware State Jan. 9, but a collapse in the game's final minutes gave the Hornets a 49-48

conclusion.

Within the next week, head coach Bobby Collins received a three-year contract extension guaranteeing him the position through 2012-2013.

"I am grateful that the school made a commitment to bring me back for three more years," Collins said. Hopefully, we can get this program back to the winning ways it's accustomed to in Division II."

In those five wins, the Rams finished January posting a 5-3 record, creating less turnovers, more assists, and by outrebounding opponents.

The Rams lost their next two games, a close 75-69 defeat by Florida A&M and to Bethune-Cookman before wins over Ferrum College and Howard with scores of 62-49 and 62-58 respectively.

Another close loss, a bitter 55-53 defeat to Hampton Feb. 8 gave the Rams a 9-13 record.

"I wish we could've won more games," Collins said.

"We lost three games at the buzzer. Some games just got away from us that we could've won."

WSSU followed with a two-game road trip to Baltimore in mid-February and put up a 1-1

record. The Rams lost to Morgan State 79-63 and completed the sweep over Coppin State 70-60.

After a 74-60 loss at Norfolk State, the Rams made history at the Greensboro Coliseum defeating NC A&T for the second time in the season. The two wins were the first time WSSU swept the Aggies since the 1979-1980 season. The Rams came from behind in both wins over the Aggies.

The Rams lost the next two games at home to Florida A&M and to Bethune-Cookman. WSSU was able to conclude the season March 4 with a 61-59 win at South Carolina State on a 3-pointer from junior Andrew Jackson as time expired. The Rams finished with a 12-17 record.

"During our season, our goal was to play hard every game and compete every play," said sophomore Lamar Monger.

"We did that in most of our games. Also, a plus to our season was our wonderful fan support. Whether we were winning the game or losing, the fan support never left."

Davis was named to the All-Independent Men's Basketball Second-Team March 9.

Davis started in 24 of the 29 games, averaging 11 points and eight rebounds a game. He was chosen as one of the best 10 players in Independent Conferences.

Davis led the Rams with 317 points, including a career-high of 32 points in a game Feb. 13 against MEAC-Champions Morgan State.

Exiting the complete transition to Division I, the Rams will go back to Division II and CIAA play next season and will return a nucleus of players including Davis, Morris, and freshman Marcus Wells.

"I really didn't know what I was going to get out of this team this year," Collins said.

"But it ended up being one of the most enjoyable teams that I have coached. Now that we're going back [to Division II], I'm excited."

"There is light at the end of the tunnel. In the past four years we competed, but there was no chance to participate in any kind of tournament. There will be a will now that the kids will have a purpose.

"We can do something special with keeping these guys together."

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