

N. C. College Eagles See 'Golden Decade' Return

By Lester Perry, Jr.

N. C. College's high flying Eagles who has not won a CIAA tournament championship since 1950, a visitation title since 1957, makes preparations for its first trip to CIAA Tournament since 1963 when it was eliminated in the first round by the Spartans of Norfolk State. The three-day event, February

29-March 2, will be held in the 10,000 seat Greensboro War Memorial Coliseum and will feature the top eight teams in the CIAA.

During the days when John "Mr. Basketball-USA" McLendon, one of the last students of James M. Naismith the inventor of basketball, was at the helm of the Eagles, NCC won the first

CIAA tourney ever held (1946) by defeating the Panthers of Virginia Union in three overtime periods. Again in 1947 and '49 the Eagles returned to the tourney to lose in the finals to Virginia State ('47) and West Virginia State ('49). In 1950, led by the hot shooting of Harold Hunter (now head coach at Tennessee A&I), the Eagles stormed past West Virginia State to capture the Eagle's second and last tournament championship.

McLendon, who was appointed head basketball coach in 1940 at the age of 24, gave the Eagle's their first CIAA championship in 1941 (no tournament played at this time). His philosophy of attention to the smallest details of coaching, insistence upon perfection, conditioning, wholesome respect for all opponents but fear of none, dedication and devotion to the game and team loyalty has resulted in the second greatest lifetime percentage of wins among coaches in the past 26 years, of 539 games played over a period of nineteen years as head coach of college teams; he won 445 for an amazing lifetime record of .826. This record can be matched only by Adolph Rupp of Kentucky. Leaving NCC in 1954, McLendon coached Tennessee State A.&I. to three straight NAIA championships in 1957, 1958 and 1959. The 1960-61 season saw him become the first Negro to coach a National Industrial Basketball League team. His Cleveland Pipers won the visitation championship with a record of 24-10, won the NIBL championship play offs and the AAU National Championship. He coached the National AAU selected personnel team on an eight-game tour of Russia and one game in Sweden, winning all nine contests. At the present he is head mentor at Cleveland State, Cleveland, Ohio. It was under the leadership of this great and respected coach that NCC enjoyed an era known as the "Golden Decade", which saw the Eagles win eight championships in ten years.

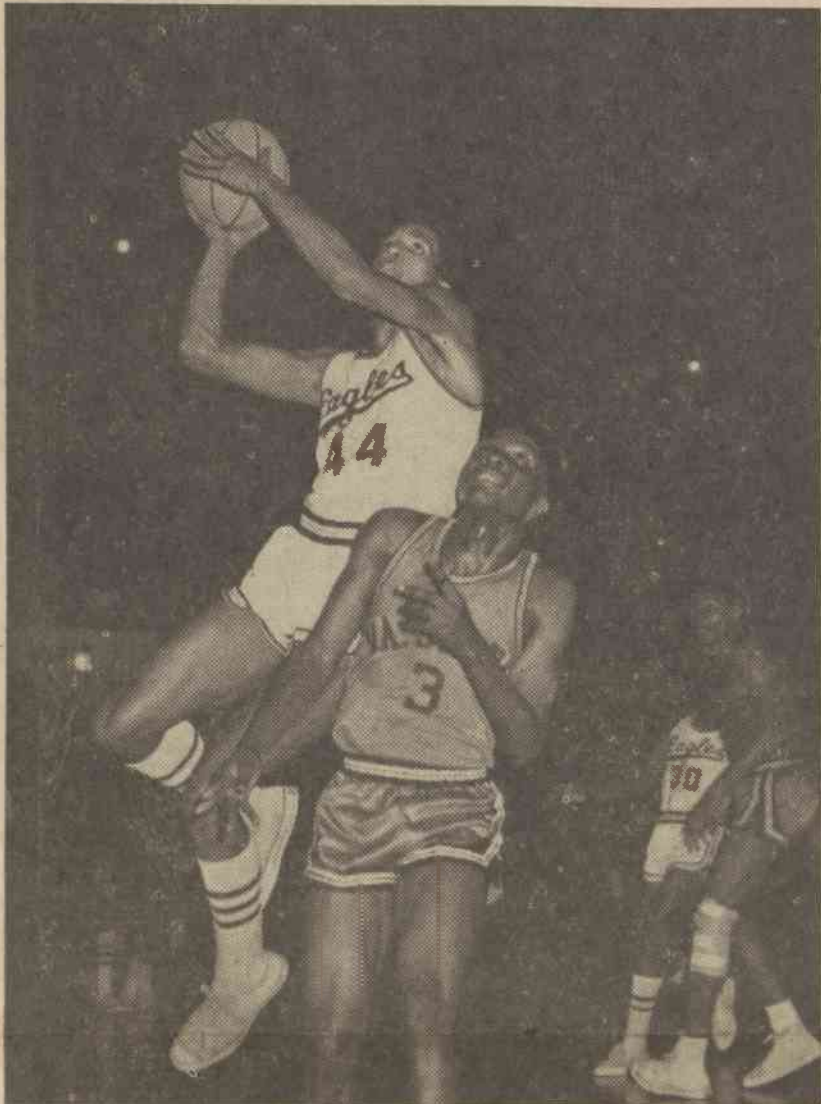
The Eagles, which last season finished — in the 18-member CIAA conference, this season exploded into one of the most surprising and most certainly one of the best quints Coach Brown has produced during this decade.

Just what were the elements which were instrumental in the attainment of the Eagle's winning season? A study of game statistics and conferences with players revealed that a tight stubborn defense, a balanced scoring attack, and a cohesive playing unit were the major factors contributing to the prosperous season just completed.

The Eagles led the CIAA in team defense. According to the latest statistics released by the commissioners office at the time of this writing, the Eagles had held its opponents to 255 points in 19 games, for a 65.0 point per game average. In thirteen of these games the opposing teams scored less than 70 points. The Eagles' best defensive effort of the campaign was against Morgan State. The Bears were only able to score 40 points.

This season for the first time this decade, the Eagles boasted four starters averaging in double figures. All-CIAA center, Lee Davis led in this department with an average of 21.4 points per game (9th best in CIAA)

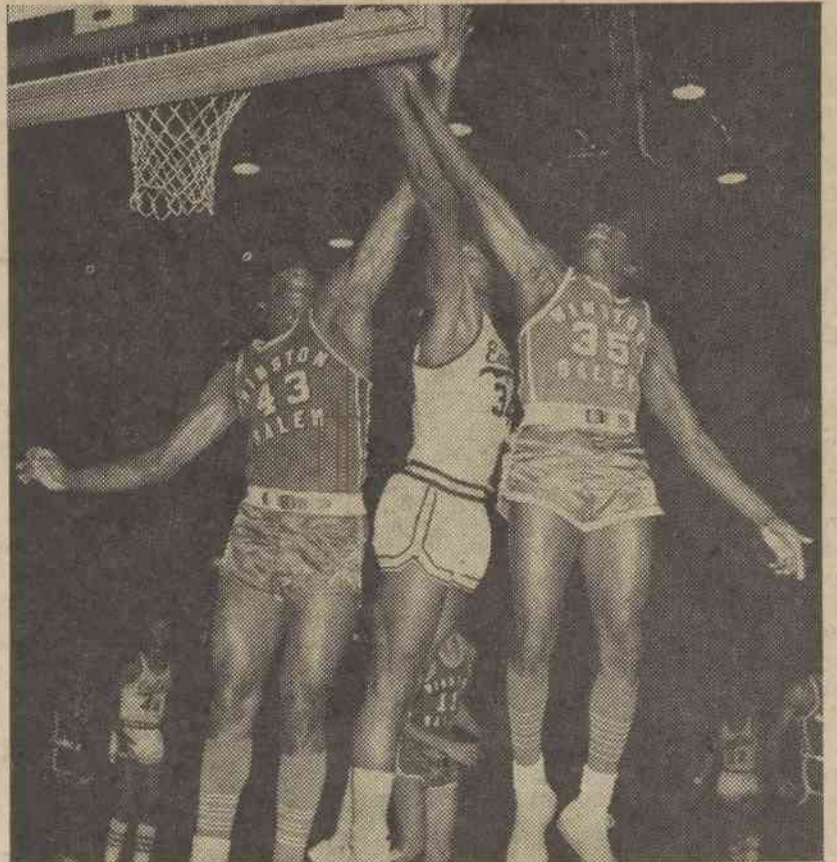
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Paris Lenon (44), Eagle forward, goes up for two of his 22 points which enabled NCC to defeat Virginia State College, 68-66 in overtime. Virginia State's Carlton Phelps (3) and NCC's Lewis Ellis (30) watch the action.



February's Player of the Month, Ronald McCrimmon (22) scores 2 of the 15 points which enabled the Eagles to defeat the defending Small-College Champions, Winston-Salem State, 63-51. Onlookers include the Eagles' Lee Davis (34) who scored 29 points; Winston-Salem's William English (left), Vaughn Kimbrough and Donald Williams (11).



All-CIAA center Lee Davis (middle) contends with Winston-Salem State's William English (43) and Bernard Collier (35) for a rebound. The Eagle's Ronald McCrimmon (22) and Paris Lenon (44) are shown in the background. NCC won the game, 63-51.



Above the Virginia State Trojans, the Eagle's Joseph Pridgen proves that the big man handle the ball. The Eagle's were victorious in the overtime contest, 68-66.



The Eagle's top scorers and rebounders, Joseph Pridgen (left) and Lee Davis (right) battle with two Virginia Union University players for a rebound in the second meeting of the two teams. Number 32 for Union is the nation's number three scorer, Michael Davis. The Eagles won the game in overtime, 55-54.