

Sports

Final Four triumph - yeah, Maryland!

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STAFF WRITER

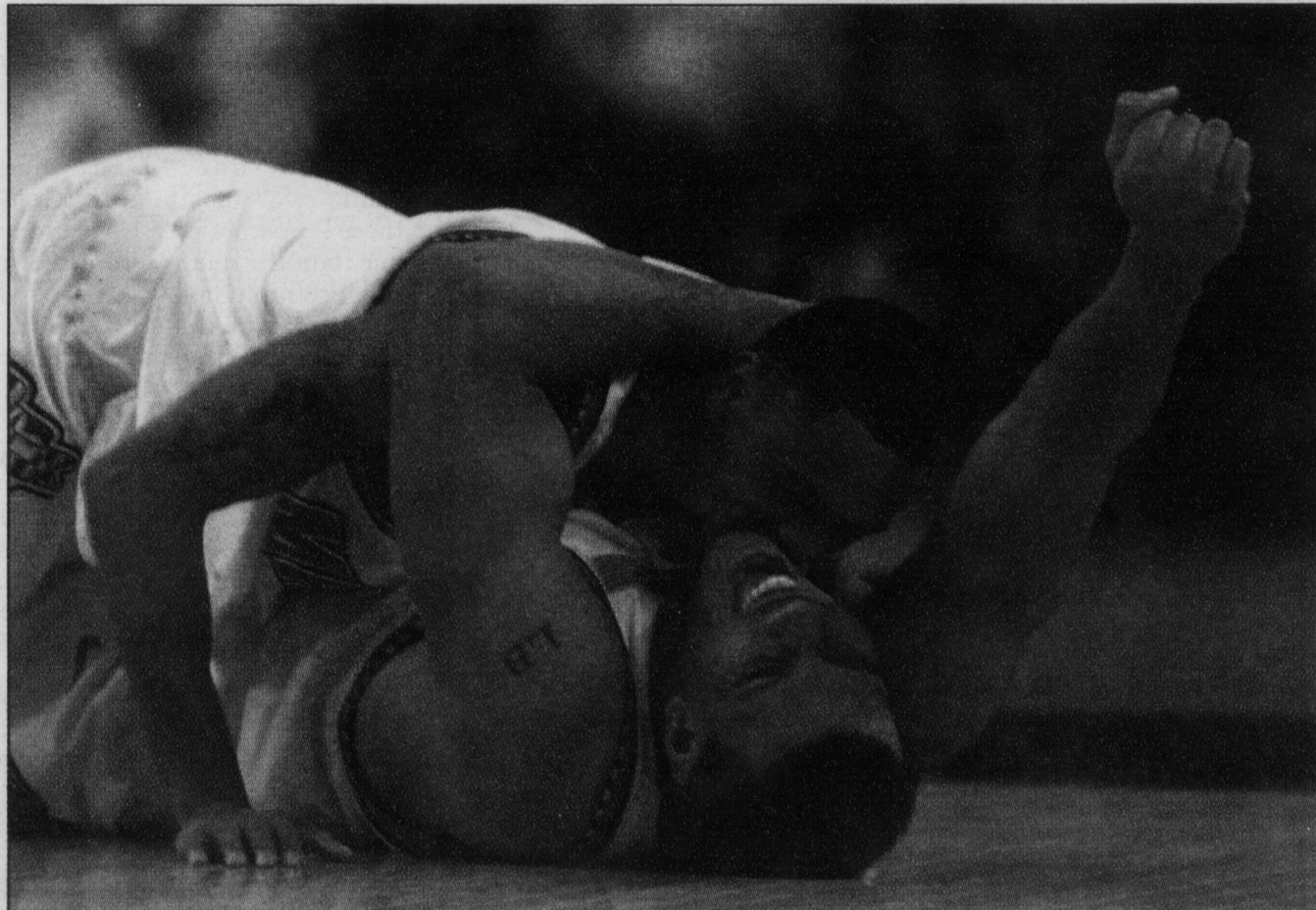
And now there is Juan ... Senior Juan Dixon led the University of Maryland to a 64-52 victory over Indiana University and its first men's basketball title. Maryland thus ended any discussion that it may have been the best program never to win a national title.

The game was not pretty, with a combined 32 turnovers. But, it was a victory for Maryland nonetheless.

Dixon, the ACC Player of the Year, was also named the Most Outstanding Player of the tournament while averaging 25.8 points per game. Although he only scored 18 points in his final game, Dixon hit the biggest shot of the game as he has a knack for doing. Thirteen seconds after Indiana took its first lead, Dixon sank a three from the wing, making sure it was Indiana's last.

Indiana failed to become the first five seed to win the national championship. On their road to the Georgia Dome, Indiana had been significant underdogs in nearly every game it played. They met the challenge by beating heavily favored teams Duke and Oklahoma.

Indiana defeated Oklahoma in the semifinal 73-64 behind Jeff Newton, who came off the bench to score a career-high 19 points. Mike Davis, Indiana's head coach, felt that his team had a great shot at the title but could not finish the game



Juan Dixon tackles teammate Lonny Baxter after leading Maryland to victory on Monday night.

strongly.

"We definitely felt like we came up short, but hopefully we'll be back again next year," said Indiana guard Tom Coverdale.

"I think Indiana's basketball future is still bright," Davis said.

Unfortunately for Indiana fans, their fate was not bright enough on Monday night. They faced Maryland who, after a collapse against Duke in last year's semifinals, was a team with a mission. Early in August, Juan Dixon predicted that Maryland would win the national championship.

Toward the end of last year, he was looking into his clouded crystal ball while many laughed at him. Now, he seems like a prophet. "I feel like I'm dreaming right now," Dixon said.

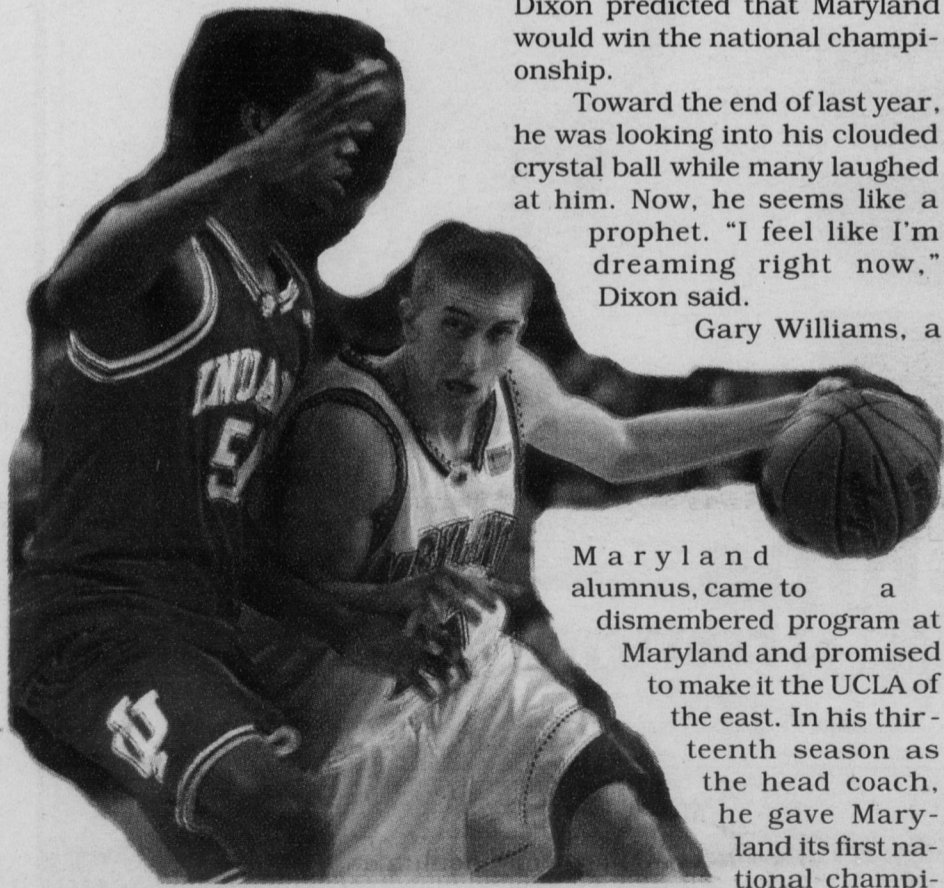
Gary Williams, a

onship. John Wooden didn't lead UCLA to their first championship until his 17th season as head coach.

Maryland became the first team in NCAA history to beat five national championship teams. They beat Wisconsin, Kentucky, the University of Connecticut, Kansas, and finally Indiana. In

the semifinals victory over Kansas, Dixon scored 33 points tying his previous career-high.

Maryland was scoffed at around the league for taking a chance on the wiry six-foot, three-inch, 160-pound Dixon. Now, with the net hanging around his neck, Dixon is having the last laugh.



Maryland's Steve Blake pushes past Indiana's Jeff Newton.

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