

CIAA Report

Tally propels Norfolk to title

By DAVID BULLA
Chronicle Sports Editor

RICHMOND, Va. -- You can't keep a good man down for long. Ralph Tally, Norfolk State's all-America, appeared snakebitten in the first half of the CIAA Championship Game last Saturday night. The 6-1 shooting guard from Atlantic City missed all six of his field goal attempts, managing only to roll snake eyes from the free throw line for two points.

Despite Tally's cold hand, the Spartans built a 31-28 halftime lead. And with Tally hoping to rally his multi-dimensional game in the second half, Norfolk seemed poised to finally beat regular-season Northern Division champion Virginia Union.

The time sure was ripe. The Panthers had won last year's tournament against the Spartans, beaten them twice in the regular season and won their last six outings against their division rivals. Norfolk had to top Union sooner or later.

The law of averages prevailed. Tally, who nearly rallied the Spartans in last season's tourney finale before fouling out, revived his shooting touch in the second half last week, scoring 22 second-half points as Norfolk dealt top-seeded Union a 75-71 loss.

It was business as usual in the final 20 minutes for the CIAA's Player of the Year -- which is exactly what his teammates expected of him.

"I knew Tally would come back in the second half and pull us through," said forward Barry Mitchell, as he gave a high five to former Spartan favorite Mike Smith. "Ralph's been doing things like this his entire career. He may not have a big half every time, but he's rarely -- make that never -- had back-to-back down halves."

Tally, named the tournament's Most Valuable Player for an unprecedented third straight time, made a variety of outside and inside moves to keep host Union from staging a late rally before a full house (10,000) at the Richmond Coliseum. His first bucket was a 21-foot three-pointer with 14:51 left that gave Norfolk (24-4) its largest lead at 45-37. His final basket came on a drive with 41 seconds to play. The Spartans, who saw the Panthers gain the lead twice in the last seven minutes, went ahead to stay on that score.

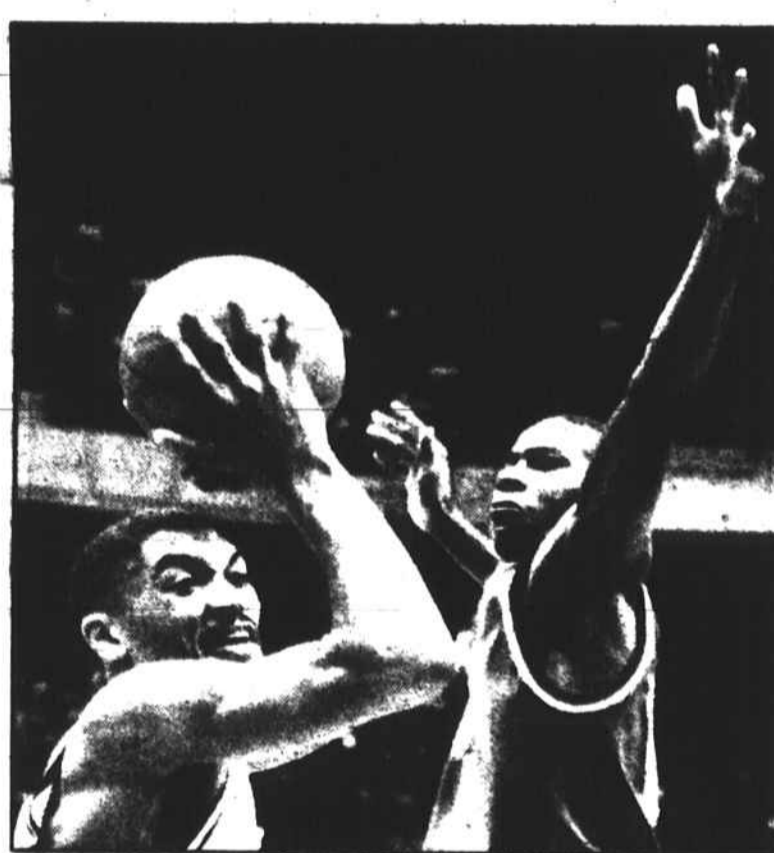
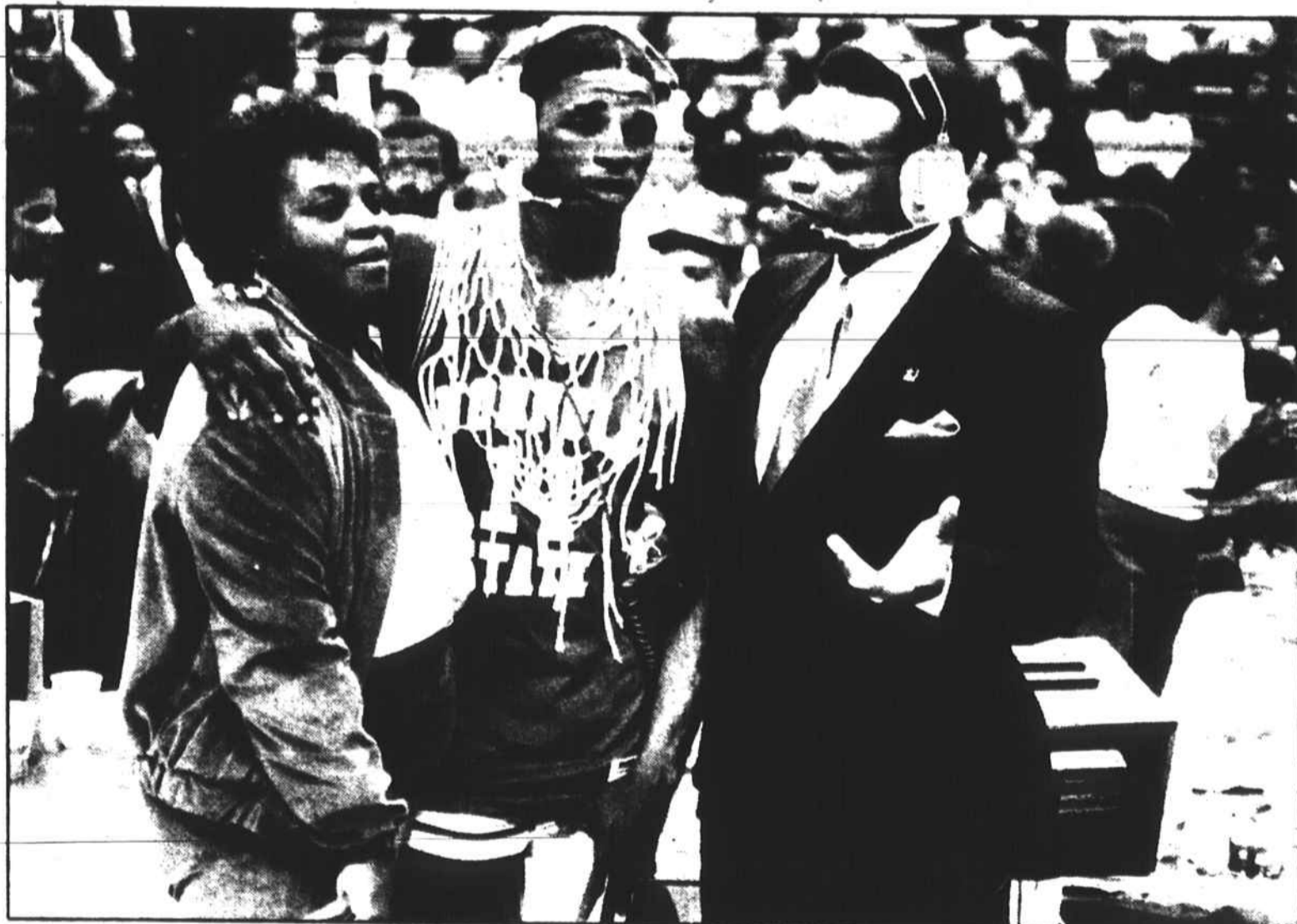
"They played a lot of zone but had to put a box-and-one on Ralph and gave everybody an opportunity to guard him," Norfolk State Coach Charles Christian said afterwards. "As it turned out, they were helpless. Ralph's game was on in the second half."

Christian, coaching his eighth title game in 12 years, also saw his team play more patiently than Union, which dropped to 23-7.

"We simplified things in the second half," said the Norfolk coach, who has now won six titles. "We wanted to go inside. When we couldn't get the ball inside, we wanted to go to Ralph. When (Union's) Jamie (Waller) made that spectacular dunk in the first half, we didn't let us affect what were going to do."

"The seniors (Robert Revell, Jimmie Dixon and Lawrence Hayes) wanted this one. Maybe they wanted it worse than Union's guys because the

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Ralph Tally, top left, drives in the semifinals against Elizabeth City State; Union's Jamie Waller, top right, gets a slam; bottom left, Tally, the tourney MVP, celebrates with his mother and BET's Charlie Neal; Barry Mitchell penetrates for the Spartans (photos by James Parker).

Women's Basketball

Green's late basket delivers Norfolk by Hampton

By DAVID BULLA
Chronicle Sports Editor

RICHMOND, Va. -- Nobody suspected Carla Green would be the heroine of the CIAA women's championship game.

Not after the Norfolk State guard missed her only three shots of the game. But she made her fourth attempt count in a big way.

The 5-foot-10 sophomore sank a 13-footer with 19 seconds left to propel Norfolk past top-seeded Hampton University 70-69 last Saturday night at the Richmond Coliseum.

"I hadn't taken many shots the entire game," the sophomore guard said, "so I was pretty tense when I received the pass. But I knew when you're open in a situation like that you don't have any choice but to shoot."

Hampton freshman Jackie Dolberry, the former prep all-America at Norfolk's Catholic High School, was a bit long on an open 18-footer with five seconds left. Ann Theus rebounded for the Spartans, who had beaten the Lady Pirates 89-76 during the regular season.

"Jackie will make that shot nine out of 10 times," Hampton Coach James Sweat said. "But we should have never gotten into a situation where one shot was the difference between winning and losing."

Norfolk State Coach Ike Moorehead, who saw an 11-point lead evaporate in the second half before Green's basket, said the key to the win was holding Hampton's running game in check.

"Hampton's a transition team," said Moorehead, whose team improved to 18-9. "So we tried to force them into a half-court game. We didn't always do that. But we wanted to hold them about 20 points under their average."

The Lady Pirates, 24-5, averaged 90 points per game in the regular season.

"When we lost the lead, they had gotten into their transition game," Moorehead said. "Hampton's so positive on offense, so we wanted to play a tight defense. I told the girls that, every time they go to the bathroom, we'd follow them. That's the only way you can approach a team that is that positive on offense."

But Sweat's team, which has been

ranked in the NCAA Division II Top 20 throughout the season, was anything but positive through the game's first 28 minutes. The Lady Pirates, who dominated the all-CIAA team, trailed 38-35 at halftime before being outscored 10-2 to start the second half.

Sweat called a timeout with 18:24 left in the game to stem the tide and his club began a gradual comeback. Ten minutes later, Anita Cooper, an all-CIAA forward, scored on a four-foot jumper for HU's first lead of the game.

It was close the rest of the way. After Cooper's layup off a pass from CIAA Player of the Year Sheila Hillman with 6:59 left, Hampton stayed ahead until Green's basket.

But gritty Norfolk State would not let Hampton pull away. Moreover, the Spartans played without one of their top players in Stephanie Roulack for the last 2:12. Roulack, a sophomore guard, finished with 13 points and five steals.

Hampton could have won the game if it had hit its free throws down the stretch.

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A Norfolk State cheerleader is bowled over by the Spartans' victory, their first over Virginia Union after six straight losses to the Panthers (photo by James Parker).