



Softball

Lady Rams seek third CIAA title

By DAVID BULLA

Coach Tim Grant likes to refer to his Winston-Salem State softball team as the Big Red Machine.

The nickname, borrowed from baseball's Cincinnati dynasty of the 1970s, is appropriate, for Grant's team has won consecutive Central Intercollegiate Athletic Association championships.

Yet, a new wrinkle in the conference's approach to the game may make the continuation of that streak somewhat difficult. The CIAA decided to switch from slo-pitch to fast-pitch this season. When Grant looked down his roster, he saw that he wasn't exactly overstocked with rubber-armed players.

Grant was a little surprised by the move to fast-pitch, although it might help his team finally draw an NCAA post-season playoff berth. The Lady Rams have had nowhere to go after winning the last two CIAA championships.

As if that weren't enough, there may be another rules change in the near future.

"It's a unique situation," began Grant, who's not one to get flustered by off-the-field commotion like rules changes. "We play under ASA (American Softball Association) rules and they call for an 11-inch ball.

"But the ASA president saw what we were playing with and called the NCAA. Apparently, we're actually supposed to use a 12-inch ball. All games up until now we've used the 11-inch ball. The commissioner (Robert Moorman) hasn't made a decision yet. But I expect we're going to the 12-inch ball sometime this season."

Last season, the CIAA played with a 12-inch restricted-flight ball. The 12-inch fast-pitch ball is heavier than the restricted-flight ball.

Grant's pitching situation was further complicated by the loss of Monica Roberts, an academic casualty. Roberts, who would have been a senior, posted a 23-2 record with 16 shutouts last year.

Thus, Grant was left to teach the fast-pitch techniques to junior Trudah Lucas and sophomore Sonya Hurt.

"Right now I'm just telling them to throw strikes," said Grant, whose 1985 team went 25-2. "The reason I'm going with that philosophy is because our defense is so strong that it can pull us through most situations."

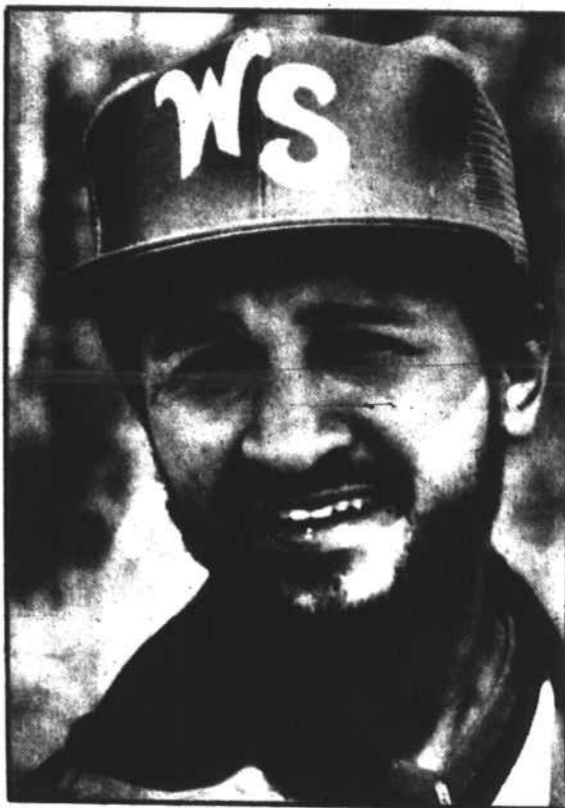
So far this pitching tandem has been effective enough. WSSU was off to an 8-2 start (3-0 in the Southern Division) going into Tuesday's doubleheader at Fayetteville State. The Lady Rams host North Carolina Central Thursday for a 1:30 p.m. doubleheader at Civitan Field.

But there have been instances of pitching breakdowns, as in a doubleheader split with North Carolina A&T last Thursday at Civitan Park.

WSSU got two solo homers from Faye Cobb and a pair of triples from Keenan Menefee to beat the Lady Aggies 18-11 in the opener. But the Lady Ram pitchers languished in the second game, a 13-3 loss.

That loss caused Grant to rethink his pitching

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Big Red Machine

Third baseman Terry Hanks, top left, makes this peg as all-CIAA shortstop Faye Cobb backs her up; pitcher Trudah Lucas, bottom left, makes a tag at the plate against North Carolina A&T; Coach Tim Grant has won 88 percent of his games in more than four years of coaching the WSSU softball team. The "Big Red Machine," two-time defending CIAA champion, hosts North Carolina Central Thursday at 1:30 p.m. NCCU was the only team in the division to beat WSSU last season (photos by James Parker).

Local Sports

Atkins' Griffin heads HOF selections

By DAVID BULLA
Chronicle Sports Editor

William A. "Head" Griffin remembers that, when Atkins captured a third straight state championship in basketball in 1954, the Camels were victims of a fast one.

"We beat Laurinburg Institute in the state championship game," said Griffin, one of six people to be inducted into the Winston-Salem/Forsyth County High School Hall of Fame May 23 at the Hyatt Hotel. "I made the winning shot on a tap-in with two or three seconds to go.

"But they slipped one by us. Back then there was a national championship for black high schools at Tennessee A&I (today's Tennessee State), and Laurinburg went and won the national championship. But we had won the state title and were supposed to go to the national championship. We complained and they slapped Laurinburg with probation."

Also to be inducted in next month's ceremonies are James
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Head of his class: William A. "Head" Griffin played on five state championship teams at Atkins in the 1950s (photo by James Parker).

Youth Basketball

AAU offers another opportunity

By DAVID BULLA
Chronicle Sports Editor

Bill McClain, coach of the Warriors Amateur Athletic Union team, says AAU basketball gives young players a second chance to show their talents.

"The whole tradition of AAU basketball is geared towards kids who wanted another chance," said McClain, whose 17-and-under team will play in the state tournament at Concord next weekend. "Tryouts for a high school team are highly competitive. If a coach doesn't see eye-to-eye with a youngster for some reason or another, he'll use that as his basis for making the cut.

"AAU picks up kids who are not in organized ball but can play the game. AAU ball even gets kids into school. Cleveland State showed that."

Kevin "Mouse" McFadden, the Vikings' outstanding guard, came out of an AAU program in New York. McFadden led Cleveland State to the third round of the NCAA Tournament before being eliminated by Navy.

Ron Hollingsworth, who coaches the 19-and-under Twice As Nice All-Stars, says that the local AAU program provides an invaluable service for high school basketball.

"This program has been overlooked by the school system," said Hollingsworth, the former East Forsyth and Howard University player. "I believe this program is helping players as much as

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Bill McClain readies the Warriors for state AAU tourney next weekend (photo by James Parker).