

Looking Back At WSSU Sports

Rams' bizarre basketball loss and CIAA football title highlight '87

By RANDY PETTITT
Chronicle Sports Editor

Winston-Salem State University can look back at 1987 as a year of milestones.

It was the year that Bill Hayes took WSSU back to the promised land, snapping a four-game losing streak in the previously elusive CIAA title game. The Rams promptly drubbed Hampton on their home field, 22-12, to claim their third CIAA football crown in the Hayes era.

The 365 day period brought both extreme lows and highs for the basketball program at WSSU. In February, a talented Ram team had top-ranked Virginia Union on the ropes in the semi-final round of the CIAA tournament, but a bizarre ending left them staring in disbelief.

With WSSU leading 70-69 and time running out, Union's Doug Cromartie snared a rebound of his own missed shot and attempted to put up a fallaway jumper. He instead stumbled, taking three or four steps before hurling the ball towards the basket.

Thinking they heard a whistle to signal a traveling violation, the Rams stopped and VUU's Tony Dallas took the ball from a teammate and threw in a layup before the buzzer. Game officials quickly signal the basket good and hastily exit the arena.

Coach Clarence "Bighouse" Gaines couldn't even argue his point, as the game was declared over and left WSSU packing for home.

"We were screwed royally and I'm trying to be as mild as I can," said a very angry Gaines following the

"The victories are a result of the great young men who have come through this place," he said, downplaying the hoopla of passing Phogg Allen for second place on the all-time college win list.

"We've had some great kids, so naturally, we're going to win some games along the way. It's a tribute to this institution if anything."

WSSU Football: Back On Top

Upon the completion of the 1987 football season, Coach Bill Hayes admitted another loss in the CIAA title game would've been awfully hard to swallow.

"We could go undefeated during the entire season," Hayes told an audience at a Ram Booster Club banquet. "And we would still be judged on one game: the CIAA Championship game."

"This 1987 team will always hold a special place in my heart. They just walked and talked a little different than the rest. But on paper, the 1988 team should be head and shoulders better. I challenge them to successfully defend the title."

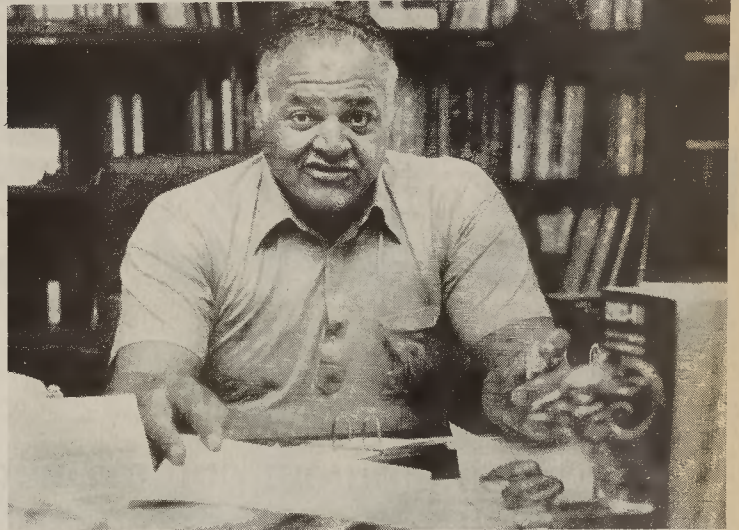
-- Coach Bill Hayes
WSSU Football

"The fans and the community never let us forget it when we lost last year (in the 1986 campaign). We had to win this one or I don't know what we would've done."

Hayes said seniors Mark Wallace and Anthony Blaylock took command during the final days before "the big one."

"Those two took matters into their own hands," he said. "They came up to me and said anyone who didn't give it everything they had in practice that week would have to deal with them. They told me there was nothing I could do about it either."

"I didn't have much to say -- what could I say. All I know is that we had one hell of a good week of



A Milestone

When Winston-Salem State defeated Paine College in December, the victory lifted Gaines into second place on the all-time win list in college basketball (photo by James Parker).

the end of an important three-game road trip that probably clinched the Southern Division for WSSU.

They went on to stop N.C. Central, 25-0, J.C. Smith, 27-13 and Livingstone, 30-6 to go unbeaten in the Southern Division. Sandwiched between, was an 11-8 win over Division I-A Middle Tennessee State and a loss to unbeaten Central State of Ohio.

Though no one said anything, everyone knew Bill Hayes wanted so badly to win the 1987 CIAA title.

Thankfully, there were no negative questions to be asked on the eve of November 21. A 22-12 win over Hampton gave fans an opportunity to see a very emotional Hayes.

Teary-eyed, he spoke to the press briefly and strode off the field.

A game official offered Hayes some left-over prizes.

He kindly took them and said: "Thanks, but I got what I came here for."

Indeed, the Rams finally got what they had coming to them -- a much deserved CIAA football title game victory. It was only fitting, considering they dedicated the 1987 season to the late Wylie Harris, a former WSSU coach who was always a winner.

Other WSSU Notables

Despite having a team loaded with freshmen, the Winston-Salem State wrestling squad made a spectacular run at the CIAA title before settling for second.

In doing so, the Rams sent CIAA champions, Danny Boden, Bennie Carver, James McLinnaham and Henry Byrd to the NCAA tournament.

It was the first time since 1983 that WSSU had sent a wrestler to the NCAA's.

Coach Mel Fair, who was named CIAA Coach of the Year, was among the few who had faith in the young team.

"I had high expectations for them," said Fair. "I expected us to win the CIAA or at least mount a considerable challenge."

For a team so laden with youth, the Rams were indeed a pleasant surprise in 1987.

The Lady Rams basketball team was bumped off in the early portion of the CIAA tournament, but the presence of Carolyn Huntley could not be understated.

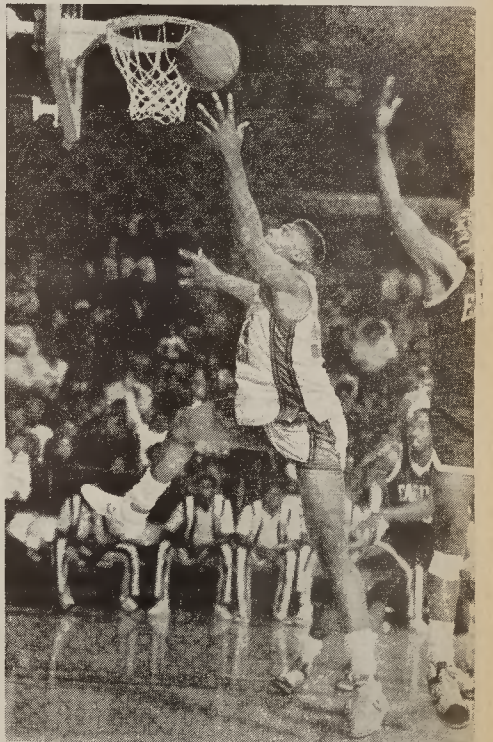
Huntley reaped in a number of top honors, including her naming to the Kodak All-America Team. She was the heart and soul of the Ram offense, leading the team in scoring, assists, steals and free throw shooting.

Coach Al Roseboro led his Lady Ram volleyball team to a respectable season, as WSSU played host



Fresh

When N.C. A&T beat WSSU 24-10 at Bowman Gray Stadium, the Rams decided it was time to change gears. Coach Bill Hayes and his staff elected to gamble on freshman quarterback, Connell Maynor. The move proved to be successful, as Maynor won his first three starts and the Rams were 7-1 while he called the signals. He finished among the top five in the CIAA in passing percentage (photo by James Parker).



Gary Cromartie lays in the easy two during a key Southern Division victory over N.C. Central last season (photo by James Parker).

to the CIAA tournament. They shocked the league by advancing to the finals, before losing in straight sets.

Defending CIAA softball champions, WSSU, had an off year. The Lady Rams got off to a 1-6 start and never recovered.

Coach Tim Grant said he expected a down year, but not that far down.

"I was a little disappointed," he said.

nightmare. "They (the game officials) didn't have the guts to call the walking violation on him."

With well over 300 losses, Gaines had none that compared to this one.

"Of all the ones that I've lost, this one hurts the most," he answered.

"We lost because of a couple of gutless (expletive deleted). I don't like to complain about losing and I've been in this business a long time. But we got screwed."

Alexander Hooper, who has since graduated and awaits a chance to play professional basketball, was equally as blunt.

"Even Ray Charles could have seen that," he said. "Everybody froze. Mr. John Russell (one of the three game officials) blew the whistle and we reacted. The officials didn't have enough heart to do the right thing."

And so the 1986-87 basketball season came to a very disappointing close.

But as the 1987-88 season rolled around, there was nothing to detract from a milestone for WSSU and college athletics.

On a dreary November night in Winston-Salem -- a night where many Ram faithful were on their way back from WSSU's 45-14 loss to Troy State in the Division II football playoffs -- Gaines made history. His Rams disposed of Paine College and the victory was number 771, making him college basketball's second winningest coach ever.

But on the very night he solidified his legendary status, the routine was still the same. He sat in his office with a pair of reporters, offering a bite of his chicken as he discussed the details of a win.

When asked of the importance of the occasion, he replied: "Sure it's important, we won."

practice that week."

The Rams took care of business in Hampton and looked forward to the Division II playoffs.

But as Hayes noted of their first round matchup with Troy State University: "I think we might have to play the toughest team in all of Division II."

His prophetic statement carried a lot of weight. The Red Wave from Alabama survived three close quarters and put 21 points on the board in the final minutes to dispose of WSSU 45-14.

Looking Back

For a team laden with upperclassmen and veteran ballplayers, Hayes raised the eyebrows of a lot of second-guessing fans when he made a movement toward youth.

Following a 24-10 loss to N.C. A&T, Hayes quickly phased in freshman Connell Maynor at quarterback and relegated Bobby Junior to a reserve role.

Maynor, a lively scrambler with a knack for getting out of trouble, led WSSU to three crucial wins on the road. The Rams topped Virginia Union to successfully inaugurate Maynor.

In Fayetteville, the Rams shut out the Broncos 28-0 behind a balanced scoring effort and outstanding defense.

Against Norfolk State, the freshman overcame a concussion and helped the Rams pull out a 36-20 win with 24 points in the second half. Maynor threw for 149 yards and one touchdown. He rushed for three more.

Sophomore Broderick Graves emerged as one of the league's most talented backs and calmly ripped the Spartans for 139 yards and a touchdown.

The win over the Northern Division power was



Fabulous Five

Coach Mel Fair (center) sent four members of his 1987 wrestling team to the NCAA Division II Championships. From left to right, Benny Carver, Henry Byrd, Danny Boden and James McLinnaham represented the most WSSU has sent to the NCAA tournament in years (photo by James Parker).