

It's been a puzzling season for Bighouse

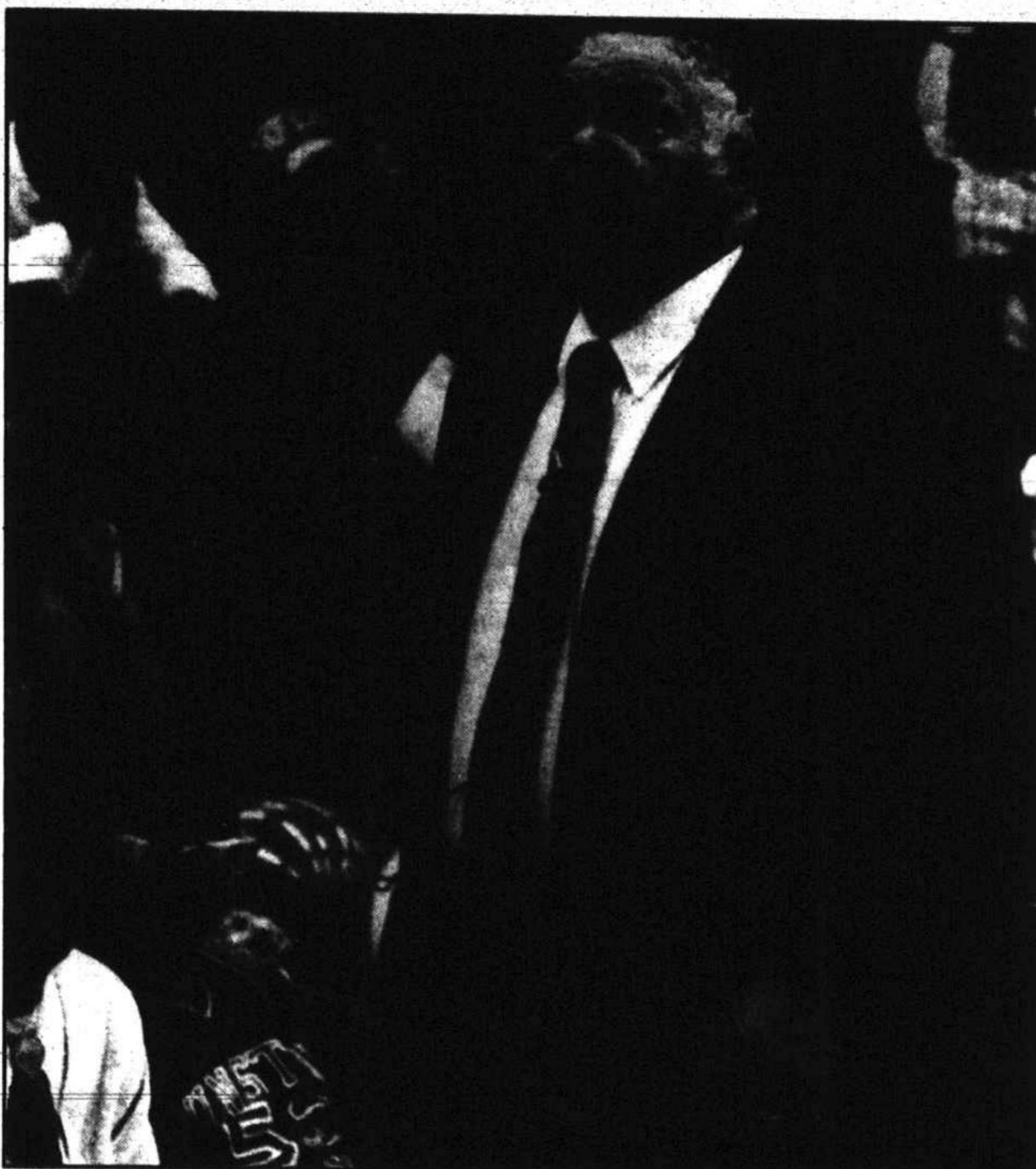
This was supposed to be a season that Winston-Salem State figured would be one of their best in recent years. Rams coach Clarence "Bighouse" Gaines brought in a group of junior college players to join returnees from a squad that finished up at 15-12 during the '89-'90 season.

You'd think that the combination of new faces and seasoned vets would have put the Rams at the top of the stack in the CIAA South. But it hasn't turned out that way. At presstime, Winston was a surprising 9-11. But what is even more of an eye-opener, is that in six of the Rams losses, the margin of defeat has been a scant 2.6 points and against some of the league's top teams at that. For example:

- two point loss to Virginia Union;
- two point loss to Shaw in double OT;
- lost by one point and six points to Johnson C. Smith in two games;
- lost by three to Fayetteville State.

Winston has yet to operate on all cylinders this season. There have been only two occasions when they've won two straight games. On top of that, the losses have come in just about every way imaginable — missed free throws during crunch time, not boxing out on the boards which leads to offensive rebounds for the other team, plus poor choices in ball handling and shooting.

"It's been puzzling, I'll admit



Gaines has been looking for answers regarding his team's erratic play.

Photo by T-Lee

that," said Gaines, who is college basketball's winningest active coach with 815 career wins. "I felt that we would do better with the adjustments we made and the new people we recruited. One of the problems is that most of our junior college players play the same position."

Gaines, however, hasn't written the season off. But he's very aware that some changes will have to be made if Winston is to be a factor in Richmond. "We had a chance to win our division," Gaines said, "and I still believe we can win the tournament. But in order for us to play like we're capable of playing, our kids have to re-dedicate themselves and fill their designated roles. Everybody wants to play forward and nobody wants to play center. But the center position is where games are won and lost."

If there's one thing that could work to Winston's advantage come tournament time, it's the fact that they are accustomed to playing tight games against good teams. The only negative is that they haven't come out on the winning end often enough. In games that have been decided by six points or less, the Rams have won only 22 percent of the time.

Gaines and the WSSU faithful are crossing their fingers that their team can even the score at the CIAA basketball party.

-Craig T. Greenlee

CIAA Women's Basketball

Norfolk State's ladies have a lot of aces

At BCSR presstime, Norfolk State's Spartans were on a roll with a 22-game winning streak that they hope won't stop until they've crowned themselves as Division II champions.

Perhaps it's too early to think about such things if you're a Norfolk State follower. Nevertheless, it's clear that these ladies have been awesome this season.

NSU has all the ingredients to go all the way — offense (91.1 ppg), defense (57.8 ppg), a lady named Tracy Saunders plus a very able supporting cast. Saunders, the CIAA's leading scorer, averages 22.1 points, 9.2 rebounds, and 5.2 steals a night. She is also a deadly shooter (49.6 percent from the field, 71.8 percent from the foul line). Saunders ensured that her team got their 22nd straight win when she hit the winning shot to lift NSU to a 67-66 win over Virginia State in early February.

Saunders gets a lot of help from her friends — Samantha Thompson (15.6 ppg, 3.9 steals), DeShonna Anderson (13.6 ppg), Kierston Portlock (4.7 ppg, 4.1 steals) and Shelia Vereen (45 blocked shots in 22 games).

But while Norfolk has gotten much

of the attention, Hampton University has put together an excellent squad. The Lady Pirates have steamed past just about everybody this year, winning 20 of 22 games. Jackie McWilliams (49.3 percent field goal shooting) and Thelka Blue (53.8 percent field goal shooting) are the major offensive weapons.

Elsewhere in the CIAA Northern Division, Virginia State hasn't proved to be as explosive at the offensive end as they have been in recent seasons, but they do compensate defensively, holding folks to 67.4 ppg. Chris Richardson (13.1 ppg, 54.8 percent shooting accuracy) carries the offensive load and Anita Taylor is a defensive specialist as one of the league's leading shot blockers.

Virginia Union packs some offensive punch thanks to Michelle Drayton's 18 ppg, while Valerie Curtis leads Bowie State with 14.6 points and 4.9 steals per contest. Elizabeth City State is the top three-point shooting team in the CIAA (40.8 percent), primarily because of Demetris Rowe, who averages 15.3 ppg. Pat Taylor (14.1 ppg) and Annisa McNeil (12.8 rpg) are Rowe's chief assistants.

St. Paul's has the CIAA's chief shot rejector in Angela Ramsey (38 in 17 games). But Ramsey can also help out offensively (12.9 ppg). Sylvia Howard is the top rebounder for the Lady Tigers with 11.4 caroms a game.

In the CIAA's Southern Division, Shaw University is prepping for another possible appearance in the tournament finals. Teresa Allen (14.1 ppg), Tracie Williams (4.6 ppg) and Edith Jefferson (10.3 rpg) are Shaw's leading ladies.

Winston-Salem State has surged in major league fashion since the beginning of the year. Leading the charge is Angela Courtney (14.8 ppg, 10.2 rpg, 32 blocks in 17 games). Courtney doesn't do it all by herself. New additions Bobbi Finel-lyn, Doris Kelly and Eltija Harper have combined to give the Lady Rams more ammunition to duel with the league's elite. St. Augustine's is usually somewhere in the thick of the title hunt and this year is no exception. Delbra Hackney is the centerpiece, scoring 18.6 points, grabbing 13.8 rebounds and shooting 58.5 percent from the field. Hackney is the league's top rebounding artist.

Livingstone College has shown that it is an up and coming squad. Shermaria Smith is the reason why. Smith is a shot blocker supreme, who scores (she's No. 2 in the conference at 21.7 ppg) and rebounds (12.6 rpg). Karen Watkins (12.5 ppg, 9.4 rpg) is more than a role player in the LC scheme, while Camille Jones runs the show with 4.1 assists per outing. North Carolina Central hasn't risen to new heights in the won-loss column, but Monica Stewart (17.3 ppg) and Angel Seymour (10.5 rpg) have come through with solid performances.

In Mary McKoy and Shani Baraka, the Lady Golden Bulls of Johnson C. Smith have a pair of top quality players in their fold. McKoy averages 19.7 ppg, 4.7 steals a game, and leads the league in three-pointers made per game at 2.4. Baraka is proving to be one of the conference's better backcourt people, scoring 13.7 points and handing out 4 assists a game. Fayetteville State is led by Ernie Punsley (14.6 ppg), Bonita Doby (12.3 ppg) and Chantina Tucker, the league's top free throw shooter (75 percent).

-Walton Dunn