

WOMEN'S BASKETBALL UPDATE

Action intensifies in season's final month

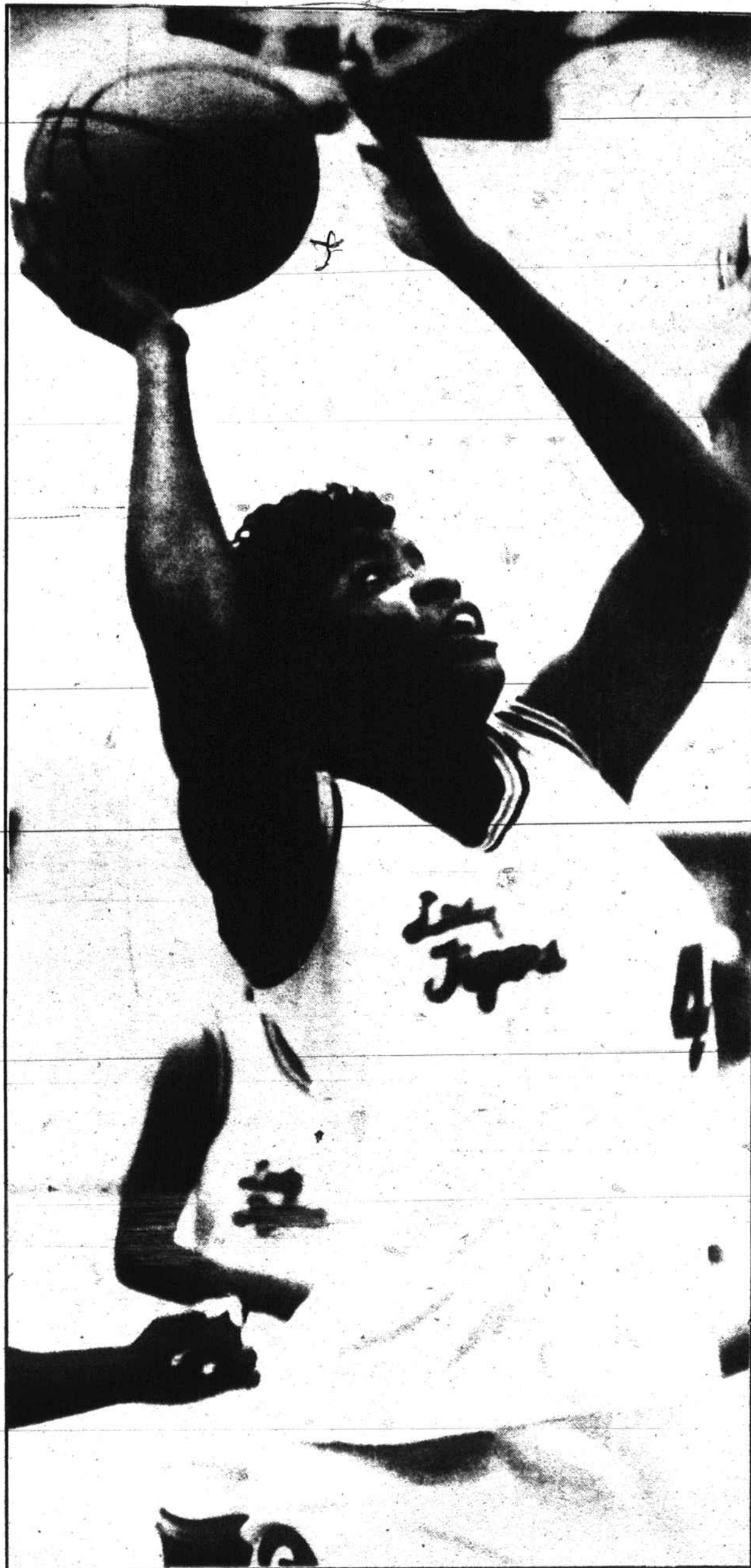


Photo courtesy of Grambling State University

Grambling's Tarcha Hollis leads the nation in rebounding at 14.7 rpg.

Women's basketball has its shares of thrills and spills, highs and lows. This season is no different as the respective teams in each league stage a battle royale to determine who will wear their conference crowns.

Here's a capsulized report on three of the four black college conferences. Information on CIAA women's hoops can be found on page 10 as part of the special report on the CIAA Tournament.

Women's Tourney Schedules

SWAC

Action takes place Feb. 27 - March 2 at Texas Southern University in Houston. Teams most likely to play for tourney title -- Alcorn State and Grambling. Darkhorse pick -- Mississippi Valley State.

MEAC

Tournament dates are Feb. 27 - March 2 at the Norfolk Scope in Norfolk, Va. Teams most likely to square off for the championship -- South Carolina State and North Carolina A&T. Darkhorse pick -- Coppin State.

SIAC

To be played Feb. 28 - March 2 at Fort Valley State College in Fort Valley, Ga. Teams most likely to appear in tournament finals -- Albany State and Alabama A&M. Darkhorse pick -- Savannah State.

CIAA

To be played Feb. 18- Feb. 23 at Richmond, Va. Games on Feb. 18- Feb. 21 to be played at the Arthur Ashe Center. Semi-finals and finals on Feb. 22 and 23 will be played at the Richmond Coliseum. Black Entertainment Television will televise the championship finals. Picks to play in the finals -- Norfolk State and St. Augustine's. Darkhorse pick -- Hampton University. For more on CIAA women's basketball, please see page 10.

SWAC

Grambling seems poised and prepared to claim the top spot as the season winds down.

The Lady Tigers are led by Tarcha Hollis (25 ppg) who is also the nation's top rebounder (14.7 rpg). Hollis, however, doesn't make up the total package. Karman Paul is a solid all-around type (16.8 ppg, 5.6 rpg, 3.1 steals) as is Dede McQuirter (11.6 ppg).

Grambling ranks No. 1 in the SWAC in won/loss percentage (.667), field goal percentage (.449), free throw percentage

(.685) and rebounding margin (+ 6.1).

Alcorn State is eager to make a return trip to the conference finals after suffering a gut-wrenching loss to JSU in the '90 tournament. The Lady Braves are headed by Lisa Powell, who averages 19.9 points, 11 rebounds and 2.5 blocks a game. Tami Varnado is Powell's equal as a scorer at 19.2 ppg, but she is also a crafty defender (4.4 steals a game is No. 2 nationally). Tonya Peters and Sherlanda Lewis provide floor balance and rebounding for Alcorn.

Mississippi Valley State gets most of its points from Donna McGary (14.3 ppg), Sandra Scott (14.3 ppg) and Bernita Alexander (10.6 ppg). But if the Lady Delta Devils are to challenge in the tournament, they'll have to improve their defense or shift their offensive game to a higher gear.

Texas Southern's forte is defense. The Lady Tigers are SWAC's second-ranked in scoring defense (67.6 ppg). Offensively, they've been successful with the three-pointers, hitting an average of 3.7 a game.

Valerie Yates (16 ppg, 8.3 rpg) and Stephanie Brown (13.6 ppg, 7.2 rpg, 4.3 steals) are the prime forces. Tangela McCullum, Patricia Crowell and Jennifer Henry comprise a strong supporting cast.

If defense was the only element needed to win consistently, Jackson State's Lady Tigers would rule with an iron paw. JSU is SWAC's best in scoring defense (60.3 ppg) and field goal defense (36.9 percent). But when it comes to offense, things tend to evaporate. The team's 59.7 ppg is last in the league. Michelle Houston (12.8 ppg) and Carla Lucas (10.5 ppg) are the leading scorers.

Alabama State is the home of the nation's leading points producer in Lisa McMullen at 30.9 ppg. McMullen is also No. 1 in three-point goals made per game (4.8) and sixth in steals (4.3 a game).

As a team, the Lady Hornets are positioned at the top of the Division 1 charts in three-point goals made per game at 6.7. However, the Lady Hornets haven't been as successful in other facets of the game. They are last in SWAC in field goal percentage defense (.456) and next to last in scoring defense (86.7 ppg).

Southern University had not won a conference game at BCSR presstime. The Lady Jaguars aren't getting enough offense (61.5 ppg) and the defense has been overly generous (80 ppg). But that hasn't kept Thelma Wilhite from putting up some very decent numbers — 15.1 ppg, 7.9 rpg, 4.9 apg, and 2.3 steals per contest. Elanese Bolton is also productive with 12.4 points and 7.1 rebounds a game.

Prairie View isn't eligible to compete

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