

folk's dream of a perfect season was smashed. Southeastern Missouri State delivered an eye brow raising 85-52 victory, giving the ladies in green their first loss of the year.

A bad game for NSU? Maybe. South-

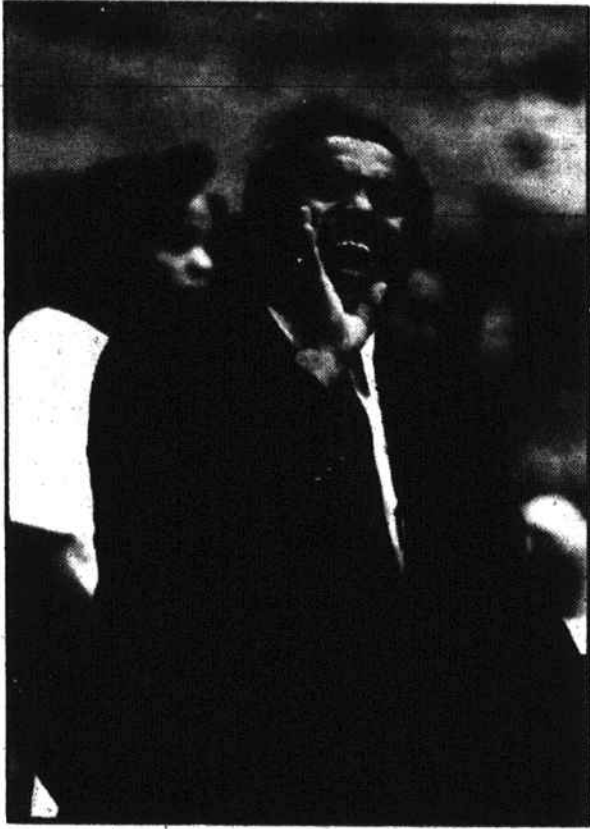


Photo courtesy of Norfolk State  
Sweat feels that his team's victory over North Carolina-Greensboro was one of the key points in their scintillating season.

eastern burned the CIAA champs with a 19-0 run in the first half and went into the lockerroom with a 41-15 lead at the half.

But there's a very telling stat that stares you in the face when you look at the final outcome. Southeast went to the foul line 43 times. The Spartanettes attempted just nine free throws.

As a result, the Spartanettes' usually disruptive press became obsolete. Saunders was the only NSU player to score in double figures with 16 points.

The absence of Norfolk's defensive pressure was the difference, says Sweat. "If we can't press, you take us out of the game. We just weren't able to press like we wanted to because some of our people got in early foul trouble."

Saunders was one victim. She drew two quick whistles and was never a factor after that. The same for point guard Jennine Tanks. Tanks' absence provided a multitude of problems for NSU because she runs the break and is often the person who initiates defensive pressure on opposing guards. In NSU's game plan, doing without her is like expecting your car to start when your battery is out of commission.

In the final analysis, Sweat contends that inexperience is what ultimately did his team in once they got to the Final Four. And let's face it, he should know. In '88, he led Hampton's Lady Pirates to the Division II championship.

Even so, he admits that there are very real differences between those two teams. "The Hampton team was dominated by seniors," he says. "Plus they had been in the playoffs for three or four years before winning the title. This team had only one senior. None of our kids have ever played at that level. It was a new experience for them. They really didn't know what to expect. It's the kind of thing you have to go through and experience for yourself."

What's really amazing about Norfolk's record-setting squad, is that they got as far as they did without Palmer, a 6-1 center.

Last year, she scored 17.5 points and grabbed 14.8 rebounds a game. Palmer was the '89-'90 Division II rebounding leader.

Palmer was supposed to be available for the last five games of the regular season and all of post-season. She was forced to sit out most of the '90-'91 season because Norfolk was placed on probation by the NCAA because she didn't sit out a full year after transferring from Central State (Ohio).

This rough and tough pivot person is a perfect fit for Norfolk's transition game.

An extremely agile player for her size, Palmer can run the floor, post-up, hit the boards and block shots. It's still not apparent why she wasn't given clearance to play when she was supposed to. Nevertheless, she'll be back next season.

And speaking of next season, NSU will be in good shape. Everyone returns except for Saunders. That's bad news for everybody in Division II.

Yes, yes, the Spartanettes will be back and with a vengeance.

Count on it.

— Craig T. Greenlee



Photo courtesy of Norfolk State  
Stephanie Palmer was absent from the court this past season and was sorely missed.

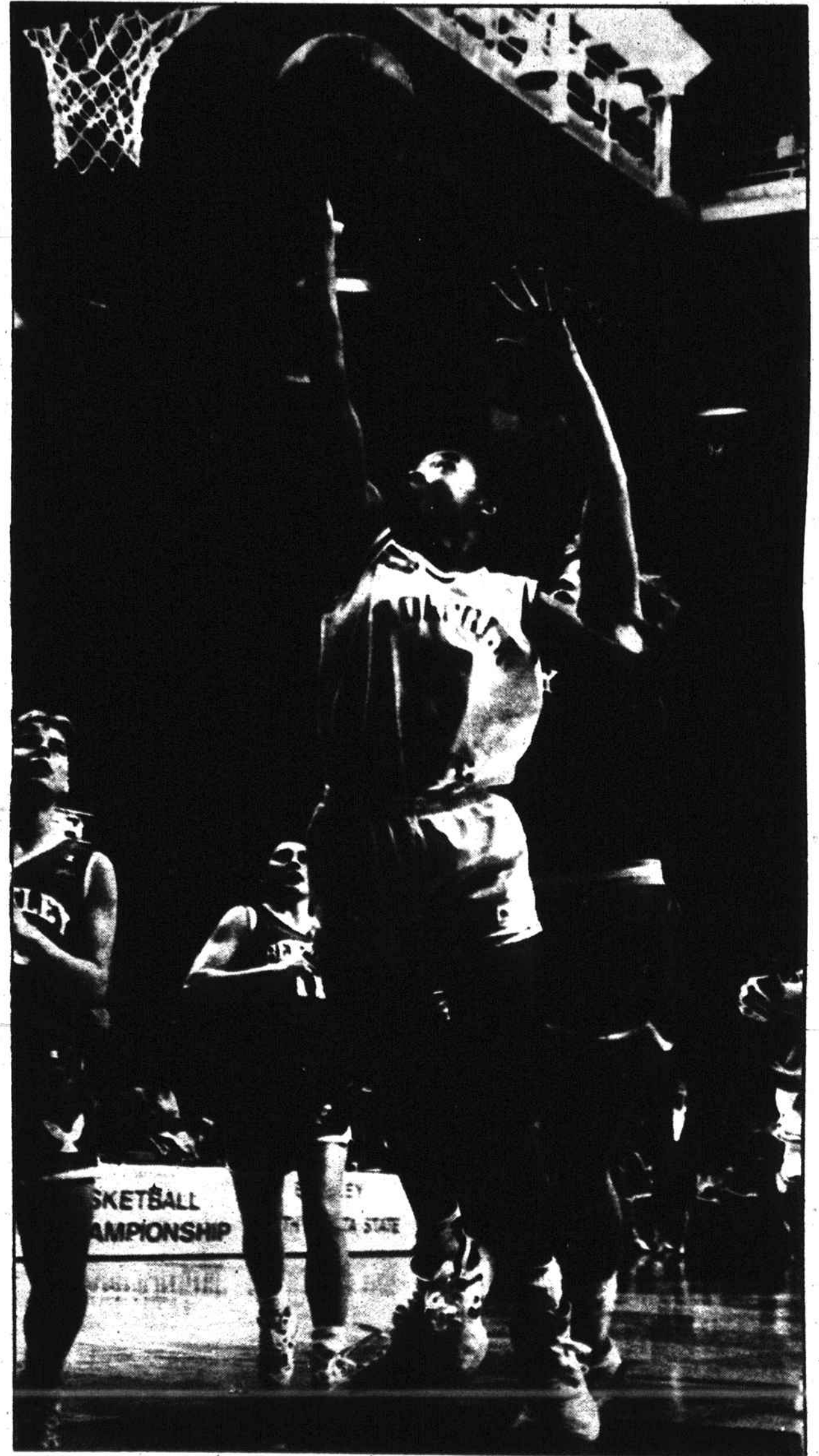


Photo by Louann Stokes  
Jennine Tanks slips inside for a basket during women's Final Four action.