

CIAA Tournament

ABANDONED

from B1

and even bad at some points in the season. But the bottom line was this team was more successful than any other in recent in the last decade.

WSSU came into the tournament with some momentum after winning four of the final five games during the regular season. That might have been the confidence the Rams needed to knock off Virginia Union in their opening round game. The Rams then extracted a large measure of revenge against an old nemesis. WSSU hadn't defeated North Carolina Central in more than six years, but took out their frustrations in an emotional victory in the quarterfinal

round that bounced the Eagles from the tournament.

Everything appeared to be headed the Rams way as they made preparations for their battle with Fayetteville State to determine which team would advance to the championship game.

The Rams victory over North Carolina Central sapped them of a lot of energy and going into Friday's game they were a team that desperately needed an emotional boost.

Unfortunately, they never got the boost that they needed. The players did the best job they could of regrouping in time for their battle against the Broncos. Then early in the game Darryl Hardy, the team's leading scorer and rebounder suffered a hyper-

extended knee. But rather than staying on the bench, he hobbled back on the court for more and spent the rest of the game battling on the boards and providing inside scoring while playing on one leg.

Too bad the Rams' fans didn't give the team the same kind of effort. If they had WSSU might have had a chance to go into Saturday's championship game against St. Augustine's. And who knows, they might have had a chance to capture the title.

They, however, never got the chance. The same fans who had been pushing the Rams down the stretch of games against Union and Central were just sitting back and watching the action unfold in the loss to Fayetteville.

What the Rams needed to give them a boost was a real home-court advantage. Often times in sports the roar of a partisan crowd is enough to offset the fatigue that players experience. Players feed off of a fired up crowd and often dig deep within themselves to find something that they didn't think was there. That can be the difference between winning and losing in sports.

Too often in sports and everyday life people use the expression, "put your money where your mouth is". Pardon the broken english, but in this particular situation the Ram faithful needed to do just the opposite. In this case, they needed to "put their mouths where their money is".

There were a lot of Rams in the crowd of 10,300 that were in the Lawrence Joel Veterans Memorial Coliseum last Friday night. But most of them were busy socializing and carrying on with other activities associated with the annual tournament. There's nothing wrong with that. But when their beloved Rams had left everything out on the court, the WSSU fans needed to rise to the occasion and provide the fan support.

Perhaps they didn't know what was at stake. Everyone loves a winner, but in order to have a winner everyone has to pitch in. Coach Hanger and the team did its part by getting the Rams to the brink of success. All they needed was just a little help from their friends. Instead

they got the cold shoulder treatment.

WSSU's fans, band and cheerleaders need to take a page out of the Fayetteville support program. The Broncos cheered in unison at every opportunity afforded them. When the pep band couldn't play during play on the court they stood up and cheered wildly and the cheers were organized if not choreographed. FSU even had a pep team that cheered, danced and yelled constantly throughout the tournament. That might not have helped the Broncos to play better on the court, but it sure gave them the confidence of knowing they had a support team. It's about time the same thing happens for WSSU.

THROWN AWAY

from B1

(46 percent) but was out rebounded 47-29.

Particularly disturbing to Duckett was his showing at the free throw line where the Broncos made only 17 of 37 free throws.

However, they managed to keep a big enough margin to prevent Winston-Salem from overtaking them in the second half.

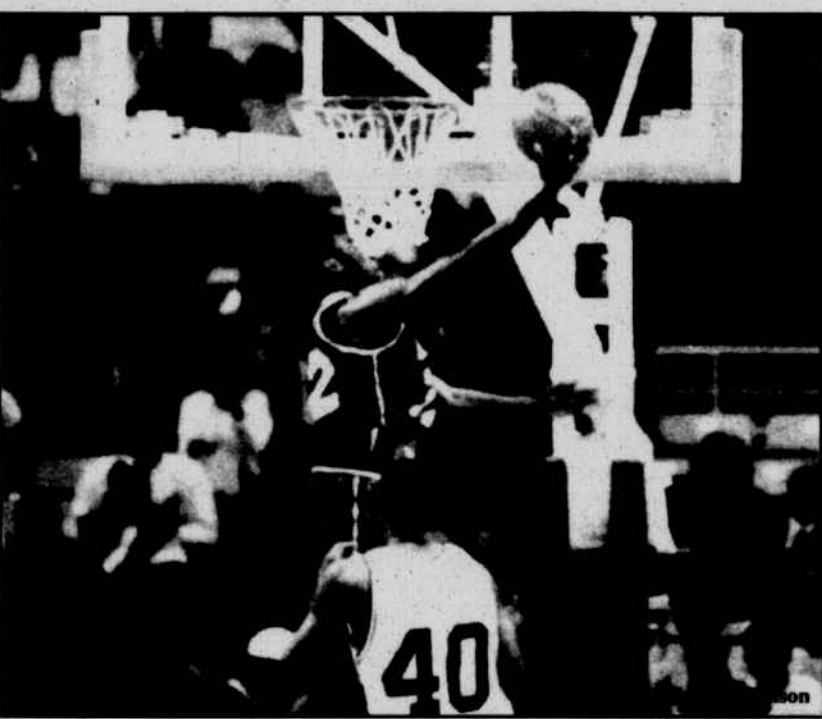
FSU started the game sluggishly on offense. The Broncos found themselves down 5-2 in the opening minutes of the game, but rallied behind the play of Larry Bratcher to go up 16-12 with 11:09 to play in the first half.

Winston-Salem State put together a run of its own to tie the game at 21-21 with 7:15 to go in the half. Phillip Allen of

FSU got untracked and keyed a Bronco spurt that gave them a 37-29 lead at the half.

WSSU was hampered in the closing minutes of the half after Darryl Hardy, its 6-8 center, went to the bench after hyper-extending his knee. Hardy, who came into the game averaging 22 points and 14 rebounds in the two Rams wins, scored nine first-half points, but missed three minutes after the injury and FSU extended its lead while he was on the WSSU bench.

FSU got a 3-pointer from Jason Tunstall to start the second half and Broncos had their way in the opening minutes of the second half. FSU got its lead up to 42-32 on Bratcher's dunk with 17:10 left in the game. The Broncos margin stayed from six to nine points over the next five minutes before WSSU got a follow shot and two free throws



Darryl Hardy of WSSU goes up for two of his game-high 22 points in the Rams win over North Carolina Central. Hardy scored 67 points in three games and was named to the all-tournament team.

from Larry Patterson to cut the gap to 53-49 with 9:01 remaining.

Duckett called a 20-second timeout and the Broncos responded by scoring on their next two possessions for a 56-49 lead with 8:16 to play. WSSU got the lead down to 56-51 on Hardy's free throws, but the Rams didn't get any closer the rest of the way. The Rams had the lead to six and had the ball with 22.2 seconds remaining

but missed consecutive 3-pointers and FSU was able to hold on to move into the championship game for the first time since they won the 1973 championship game by defeating Norfolk State.

Duckett said he thought before the game that the team that persevered would win. Like WSSU, the Broncos came into the semifinal round after pulling

off an emotional, upset win in the quarterfinal round.

"What we saw tonight was one team outlasting the other," Duckett said. "There was so much emotion in last night's game. I thought I would be a let down for both teams. I thought the game would be determined by whichever team had enough grit to grind it out."

Bratcher led the Broncos with 18 points, Tunstall scored 15, Darrin Johnson had 13 and David Brown added 10.

Hardy was the only WSSU player in double figures with 23 points. He also had a game-high 14 rebounds for the Rams, who finished the season 15-13. Fayetteville State improved to 15-13 before losing to St. Augustine's in the championship game.

Persistence paid off for Bowie

from B1

Did she feel any pressure to lead her team to the title?

"There wasn't any pressure," Lemons said. "We just had to realize what we had to do and go out and execute." After signing with Bowie State and Coach Ed Davis, Lemons said she expected big things. Although the program was at a low point, Lemons said she felt she and the freshmen in her class would lead the Bulldogs program to better days.

"I did envision winning the CIAA Tournament," Lemons said.

"I just didn't think it would take four years." Last year the Bulldogs started out strong. Bowie finished second during the regular season and advanced to the tournament semifinals

before suffering a controversial loss. This time they were not to be denied by anything.



Brandy Lemons

"For me the key to this team was its persistence," Davis said. "It is an honor to win the tournament. It was a major challenge for us at Bowie State. It means a lot to our student body, the alumni and our fans."

Lemons was one of a solid

group of seniors who anchored the unit.

Before the team started we got together and dedicated ourselves to winning the tournament," Lemons said. "We put in a lot of blood, sweat and tears to get here. In the off-season we were out on the track in 90 degree heat and in the gym where it seemed like it was 150 degrees. But that made us like family. Sometimes we get mad at each other, but on the court we stick together through thick and thin." Although she said there was no pressure on her, Lemons said the players on the team look to her to set the tempo for the team on and off the court. "I feel as though I have to be the leader," Lemons said. "My teammates look to me as a leader. When they look to me I can't disappoint them, I

can't let them down."

Kim McCall, Yolanda Matthews and Dawn Hancock were all in Davis' first recruiting class at Bowie. There were some others as well, but they didn't make it through their first three seasons. But the four that did stay formed the nucleus of this year's team.

In addition to Lemons' 15.5 points and 3.5 rebounds, McCall supplied 7.0 points and 4.8 rebounds, Winstead was fourth on the team with a 5.9 scoring average and 4.0 rebounds and Winstead was next with 5.2 points, 60 assists and 29 rebounds on the season.

"We're a close group," Lemons said. "We came together and had confidence in Coach Davis and what he told us when he recruited us."

Coming out of high school

four years ago, Lemons said she was all set to attend Norfolk State before Davis was able to convince Lemons and her mother to visit the Bowie campus.

"When Coach Davis was recruiting me I liked what he said, but I had decided to go to Norfolk," said Lemons, a Richmond, Va. native. "I had signed the national letter of intent and was about to mail it back to Norfolk when my mother talked me into visiting Bowie."

"When we visited Bowie, I fell in love with it," Lemons added. "I really liked the people and the things that Coach Davis talked with me about. He said he was going to turn this program around and I believed him."

Rather than join a program that was well-established, it made better sense to Lemons to

go somewhere where she could help establish a program.

"Coach Davis convinced me that I could help turn the program around and we could be conference champions," Lemons said.

Even though the Bulldogs had to live through some tough days in the first year, Lemons said she never doubted that the Bulldogs would reach their goals.

"Coach Davis was always fair, but he was tough on us," Lemons said. "He expects nothing less than the best from us. If we go out and give 100 percent, he wants more. He wants us to give 150 percent. He knows how to get it out of us. When it seems like you can't do any more, he knows you can always dig a little deeper."

St. Augustine's makes history

from B1

ule."

All through the week Lee called the Falcons a "team of destiny". It began after his team defeated Norfolk State in the quarterfinals. Then in Friday night's semifinal victory over Elizabeth City, Lee said "God's hand is on St. Augustine's". When they captured the championship game, Lee said his team had been "tried in the fire".

"I'm happy to be surrounded by this group of fine young men," he said. "We've been through some ups and downs, but in the end we always find a way to iron things out. In a way it's been tough. But God has a

way of evening things out in the end."

Bernard Heard and Eric Harris combined to score 18 points to lead the Falcons in their championship game victory to give St. Augustine's its first-ever CIAA Tournament title.

The Falcons, who entered the CIAA in 1953, had taken home the runner-up trophy on six separate occasions. They finished second in the tournament to Winston-Salem State in their first year in the tournament and also lost in championship games in 1960, '77, '80, '82 and '84.

St. Augustine's also became the first team from the Southern Division to win the men's

championship game since Winston-Salem State beat the Falcons for the tournament title in '77.

For much of the game most of the game it looked like they would simply coast to victory. The Falcons led by a 37-20 lead at the end of the first half and cruised to a 20-point lead midway through the second half. Chris Elliott's 3-pointer at the 10:24 mark put the Falcons up by a 54-33 margin.

Fayetteville went on a 19-4 run to cut the lead to 58-53 with 3:14 remaining in the game. But St. Augustine's, which turned the ball over 25 times in the game, converted 10 of 15 free throws in the final 2:19 to hold on for the win.

Heard, who was named the tournament's Most Valuable Player, made four of five free throws in the final minutes to help his team preserve the victory.

"This is truly a dream come true for us," said Lee, a 1958 graduate of St. Augustine's and a long-time coach at Goldsboro High. "We beat a fine, well-coached team."

Lee said he told his team at intermission to expect a spirited comeback attempt by the Broncos.

"I told my guys at the half that a good team is going to always make a run at you," Lee said. "I tried to prepare them for it, but we were out of timeouts after using them up early

in the game."

Still the Falcons found a way to eek out the win.

"Good teams stick together when the game is on the line," Lee said. "Champs find a way to win and chumps find a way to lose."

The Falcons, who finished 10-13 in their first season under Lee, 13-13 in their second season with Lee at the helm and improved to 23-7 this season, advanced to the South Atlantic Region Division II playoffs in Durham. They will join North Carolina Central and Elizabeth City in the six-team field.

St. Augustine's used an 18-3 run in the final 5:38 of the first half to take their halftime lead.

Elliott and Heard led the charge. Harris got the run started when he took a pass from Elliott under the basket and put in a layup for a 21-16 lead. After a Fayetteville State miss, Heard got the ball down low and posted up for a short jumper. Heard connected on the shot, was fouled and made the free throw to give the Falcons a 24-16 lead.

Following a free throw by Jonathan Grissett of FSU, Julian Pitt converted an alley-oop toss above the rim for a 26-17 St. Aug's lead. Joseph Best got in the act at the 4:16 mark when he took a pass from Elliott and scored a layup behind the Broncos defense.