

SPORTSWEEK

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SECTION B

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Rams basketball team off to fast start

Coach Sam Hanger of Winston-Salem State hasn't been saying a whole lot since the 1997-98 academic year began.

In his first two seasons, Hanger spent a lot of time trying to convince the nay-sayers that the Rams basketball program would some day reach the level of success that it did during the glory days of Coach Bighouse Gaines.

Hanger didn't get a lot of people to believe that the program could reach that level again. But most were nevertheless impressed with the level of enthusiasm and amount of work that Hanger put into his pursuit.

After a 3-0 start this season, that includes winning the One Valley Bank Tournament in Shepherdstown, W.Va. last weekend and an 84-66 victory over Glenville State on Tuesday night, Hanger appears to have the Rams on the brink of their best year in a long while.

Granted a 3-0 record out of the gate doesn't make a season, but the start does represent the Rams' best since 1987.

It might be a case of how the Rams are winning rather than the mere fact that the team is winning that has the Rams thinking big this season.

From the outside it appears that the Rams have all the ingredients necessary to make a run at a CIAA title. Last year's run to the semifinal round of the tournament should

pale in comparison to what the Rams are capable of this season.

Hanger has gone out and found all the tools necessary to compete night in and out with not only the top teams in the CIAA, but also in Division II nationally.

The Rams already had several players with the ability to compete on the upper echelon in the CIAA. Larry Patterson, who was named to the All-Rookie team last year is one of the top 3-point shooters around. His performance at the One Valley Bank Tournament was an indication of his potential. He hit 15 of 26 shots in the tournament to earn tournament MVP honors. Mike Broadnax is one of the best pure athletes in the league. He showed flashes of his ability last season, but lacked only the consistency to be counted among the league's top players.

Windell Owens, a 6-8 string-bean forward, has the tools to be a threat both in the interior and outside for the Rams. But he also was not consistent. However, last season was his first competing on the Division II level after transferring to WSSU from a community college.

Point guard Otis Attucks had a down year for the Rams, but has been a model of consistency through his four years at WSSU. His steadying influence will be the key to the team's season.

Anthony Peake, a 6-9 center, has the rugged frame to battle down low against top quality pivot players. His only drawback is a lack of offensive capability.

The newcomers to the team could be what pushes the Rams over the top. Tyrone Thomas, a 6-1, 195-pound guard, will be tough to handle at the No. 2 guard slot. He knows how to utilize his powerful body to get to the basket.

But Hanger realizes the real key to the team is the play of Thad Young, a transfer from North Carolina A&T, who has been out of basketball for several seasons. Young has the tenacity to control the paint. Young proved that by scoring 22 points to lead the Rams in their victory over Glenville. That performance could serve as his coming out party. And if he can continue playing up to that level every night Hanger won't have to do much politicking this season.

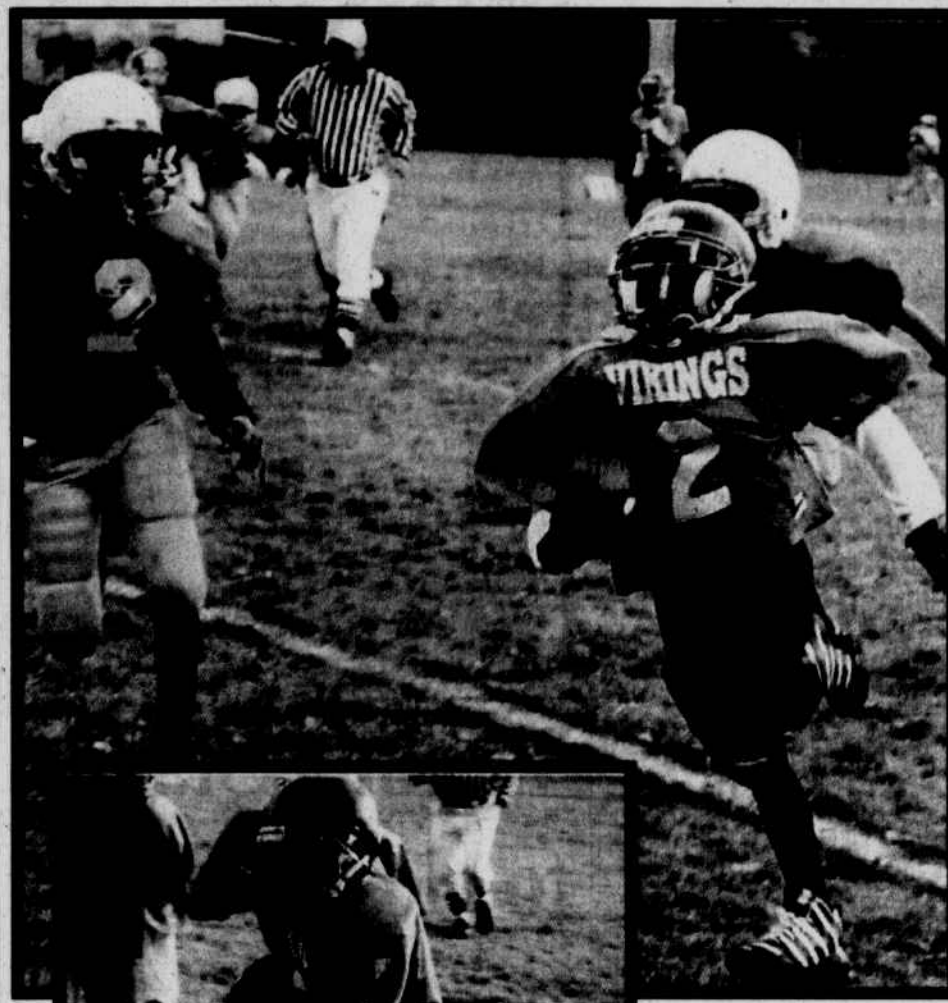
After all, actions speak a lot louder than words.



Press Box



Sam Hanger



Chris Plater (above) breaks free for running room. Wayne Crowell (L) ran for three touchdowns to pace the Vikings in their 25-12 win



Vikings down Spartans, advance to Tennessee for sub-regional playoff

▲Crowell leads the way with three-touchdown effort

By SAM DAVIS
THE CHRONICLE Sports Editor

KERNERSVILLE – The Tiny Vikings Junior Pee Wees started slowly, but gained momentum on offense steadily and rolled to a 25-13 victory over the Southeast Virginia Spartans Trojans in a Pop Warner sub-regional battle.

The victory allowed the Vikings to advance to the Regional championship game, which will be held in Johnson City, Tenn. next Saturday.

The Vikings jumped out to a 6-0 lead in the second quarter when quarterback Jermaine Pitts connected with Wayne Crowell on a 35-yard touchdown pass.

The Spartans, from Suffolk, Va., came back to tie the game minutes later when Chris Ward took a handoff around the left end and sprinted 65 yards for a touchdown.

But the Vikings got their offense going and scored 19 unanswered points to put the game away. Crowell added two more touchdowns and Chris Plater added a 45-yard run to round out the Vikings' scoring.

Coach Steve Carter of the Vikings said his team's defense set the tone early until the offense came around.

"I think the defense executed real well," Carter said. "The offense is always a little slow, but I think we came around in the second quarter. Really I'm amazed with these kids and the way we are able to do so much on offense."

"Pitts, my quarterback, in his first year at quarterback but he plays like a veteran," Carter added. "That's the thing that helps our offense, we're so wide open. We have a lot of weapons that we can use."

See VIKINGS on B3

Rice stepped up in time for Carver to cook Kinston

By SAM DAVIS
THE CHRONICLE Sports Editor

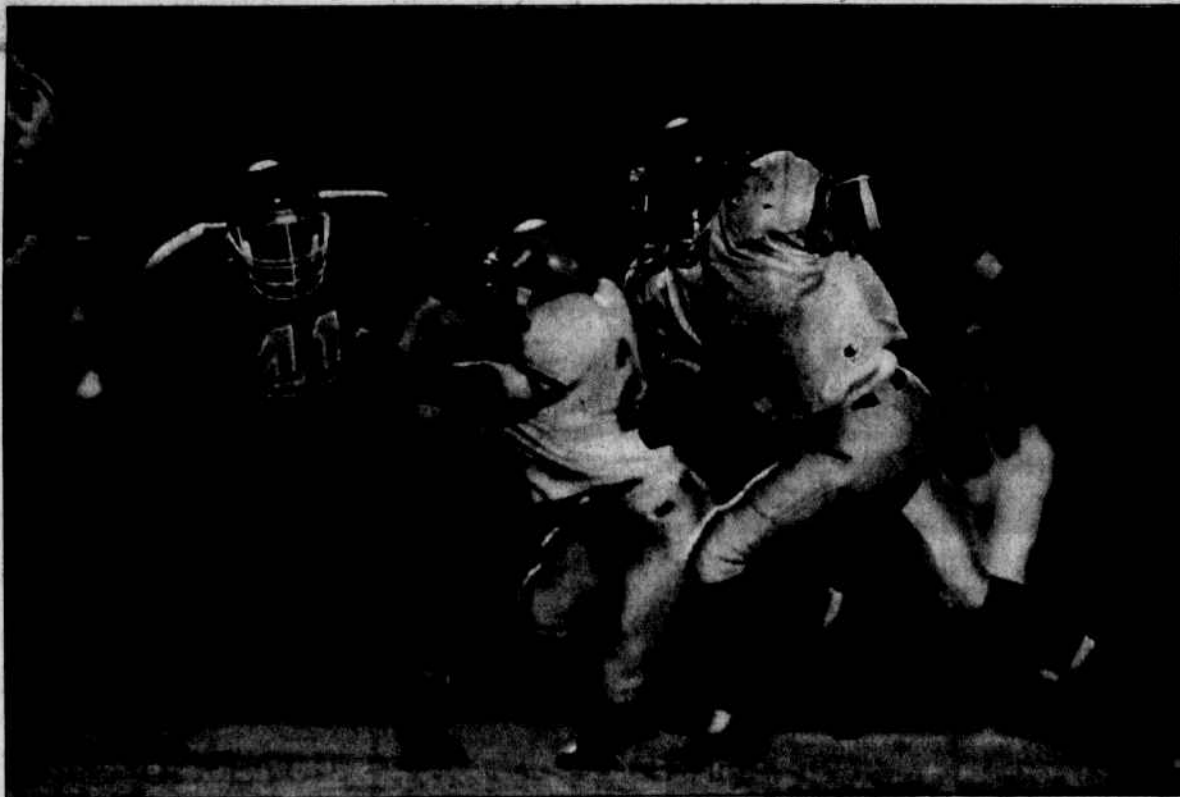
The rest of the Carver team might have taken Kinston for granted when the Vikings visited David L. Lash Stadium for a first-round State 3-A playoff game against the Yellowjackets last Friday night, but Tauric Rice didn't.

Rice had a point to prove. After rushing for more than 700 yards, catching passes for another 725 more, totaling 14 touchdowns and being named to the all-conference team as a sophomore, the 5-10, 190-pounder felt he had been taken for granted this season.

The addition of Tyre Kirby had changed the makeup of the Yellowjackets' backfield and it often left Rice as the odd man out.

Then just this week he was left off the Piedmont Triad 3-A Conference.

Rice tried to accept it all in stride. He told himself that it was strictly a numbers game. Carver placed three members of its backfield, quarterback Courtney Weaks, fullback Mike Rucker and half-



Tauric Rice, pictured here in a win against Dudley, rushed for 124 yards to ignite Carver's offense in a 20-14 victory over Kinston.

back Kirby on the all-conference team. All three had better statistics. Weaks had accounted for more than 1,200 yards running and passing, Rucker had 1059 yards during the regular season and Kirby had 1,220 and 20 TDS.

Rice's statistics weren't shabby. He rushed for nearly 600 yards and five touchdowns, had 15 kick-off returns for 378 yards and a touchdown and

See RICE on B4

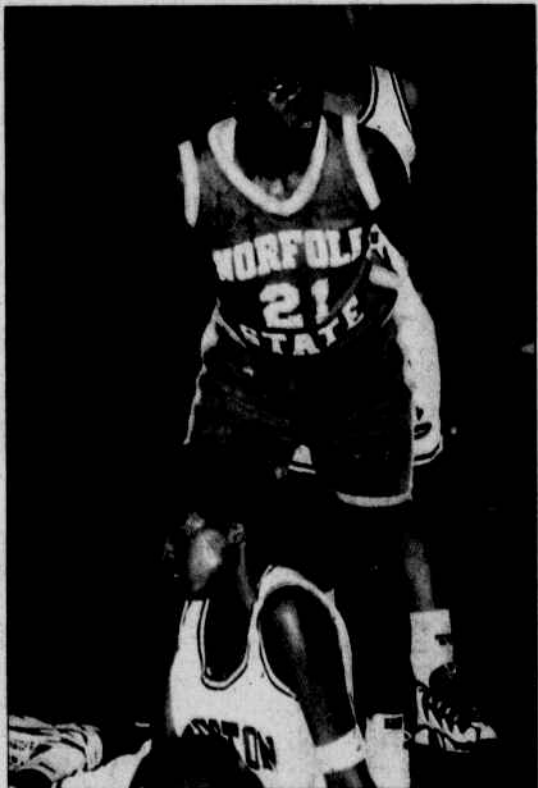
Lady Rams break even in Lock Haven tourney

▲Clark says team ready for tournament at St. Augustine's this weekend

By SAM DAVIS
THE CHRONICLE Sports Editor

Last weekend's showing in the Carol Eckman Classic, at Lock Haven (Pa.) State, gave Coach Debra Clark of Winston-Salem State a chance to get an early glimpse of her team's potential.

Clark said her team played well in spots and should have come away with two victories.



Christy Brooks, with ball, and the Lady Rams defeated West Chester, but lost to Lock Haven last weekend.

See LADY RAMS on B3

Mount Tabor hurdles one obstacle, 36-10, faces tough challenge against West Charlotte

By SAM DAVIS
THE CHRONICLE Sports Editor

Mount Tabor is playing its best football of the season now that it has seemingly rid itself of the turnover tendency that plagued it early in the season.

Spartans played well on both sides of the football last week and rolled to a 36-10 victory over Gastonia Hunter Huss in the first round of the State 4-A playoffs.

Now Coach Bob Sapp hopes his team can continue that same type play this Friday when the Spartans play host to West Charlotte in the second round of the playoffs.

In last week's win, the Spartans were able to jump out to a big lead and get most of their reserves into the



Art Brown

game. "We played well on both sides of the football," Sapp said. "Our offensive line did a great job and Art Brown came through with another big day,

rushing for 206 yards on 14 carries and scoring four touchdowns."

Brown, who now has 2,016 yards for the season, turned in what has become a typical performance for him. Travis Scott, the Spartans' quarterback, came through with a clutch performance to keep Hunter Huss off balance.

"Travis Scott did a great job of throwing the football," Sapp said. "That was a big game for him."

"Offensively, we had been turning the ball over and making mistakes," Sapp added. "But now we're doing a better job of protecting the ball."

Defensively, the Spartans only gave up 100 yards of total offense.

See TABOR on B3