



Marcus Best soars in for two during a recent game.

Rams

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much. These guys have stepped up and showed tremendous character, hard work and determination."

Some coaches don't like the idea of sitting back watching as their counterparts get under way. Duckett isn't one of them.

"It's good for us (to have a bye) because we're so banged up," Duckett said. "The extra day helps us. Not only that, but the bye means something as you progress in the tournament."

Another important aspect is knowing that your team will at least make it to action in the quarterfinal round, according to Duckett.

"When you have the bye you have another game, whereas you could lose the first game and be out of the tournament," he said.

When it comes to the Rams opponent in the quarterfinal matchup, Duckett said the Rams will be prepared for either St. Paul's, who the Rams defeated in their only battle or Livingstone, which WSSU defeated twice and lost to once.

"We played Livingstone three times and think we have a real

good feel for them," Duckett said. "I think we match up well with St. Paul's, but they have the Player of the Year (Antwaine Smith), so you know they'll give us all we want."

Regardless of their opponent, Duckett said there are two keys to the Rams' chances.

"We have got to rebound consistently," he said. "That's something that we haven't done of late and we have to get to the free throw line and make them."

The Rams' leading rebounder is Windell Owens, the Rams' 6-8 pivotman. Owens is averaging 5.2 rebounds per game. Torrian Wynn is next at 4.6. Neither are included in the league's top 10.

"Basically, it is by committee," Duckett said. "It's real hard for us because we really don't have a real physical five (pivot). The five guy has to be strong, box out well and be real fundamental. Our guards have to help out with the rebounding."

A championship finish would be an excellent way for the Rams to finish in Duckett's initial campaign. However, he said he's pleased with the way the program is coming along.

"I think it goes to show the

quality of people the seniors are and with Larry Patterson, a junior providing leadership," Duckett said. "We came in with a plan and philosophy. Not one of the guys balked. They've worked hard, listened and did everything we've asked of them. I'm glad that this transformation has gone successfully."



Winston-Salem State shook off the cobwebs to defeat Virginia State.

Lady Rams

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defense," Clark said. "We knew we had to get the ball inside and make our free throws."

WSSU led by a 34-32 lead at the half and opened up the second half with a 10-2 to increase its margin to 44-34 at the 15:45 mark. The closest the Trojans was able to come to them was seven points, 55-48 with 9:08 left to play.

Neither team was sharp in the early going. Virginia State had the upper hand in the opening minutes and took 10-6 lead on Tanga Williams' 18-foot

jumper with 14:19 remaining in the half.

Both teams had trouble putting the ball in the basket. WSSU made only 13 of 33 field goals and Virginia State fared well, making only 12 of 33 attempts. Winston-Salem State had trouble getting untracked and committed four turnovers in its first eight possessions. But they kept fighting and clawing to stay close to the Lady Trojans.

The Rams finally pulled even with the Trojans at the 7:50 mark on West's pull-up jumper. West gave the Lady Rams a spark off the bench and led the

team in scoring in the first half with seven points in only 10 minutes of action.

Shonketa Broom and LaToya Cobb also sparked the Rams off the bench with four points each. With the trio of West, Broom and Cobb playing well in the final minutes of the half, the Rams took control of the game and got its lead up to 27-21 on West's layup with 2:17 remaining in the half.

VSU ended the half with a nice run of its own, spearheaded by Williams' 3-pointer just before the buzzer that cut the Rams' lead to 34-32.

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