

Fitzgerald's hot shooting helped Vikings sail to top of standings

Elizabeth City's long distance bomber took round-about route to CIAA

Not too long ago, CIAA teams had little problem recruiting the nation's top African American student-athletes.

Because of limited opportunities, historically black colleges and universities were the haven for African American students who wanted to pursue their careers beyond high school. But those days are long gone.

Today, HBCU's have to beat the bushes to find prospective student-athletes for their programs. Although some schools

have managed to go heads up with majority programs that as a rule have more resources, that is the exception and not the rule these days.

Consequently, many HBCU's have had to rely on transfer students to fill the void. Some times the results have been positive and others negative.

In the case of Elizabeth City State, the Vikings hit the jackpot when they landed William Fitzgerald. Fitzgerald, who transferred from West Virginia's Fairmont State, has burst onto the scene like few players before him.

The 6-8 Fitzgerald has already set several school records and is on track to

etch his name among CIAA greats. Among Fitzgerald's accomplishments thus far is a 39-point performance against St. Paul's and 13-of-14 shooting from the field in a game against Columbia Union. During that game, Fitzgerald connected on nine of nine shots from beyond the 3-point arc.

With Fitzgerald leading the way the Vikings have ascended to the top of the CIAA Eastern Division standings. Coach Barry Hamler's team will be one of the favorites when the CIAA Tournament tips off.

"I feel that Fitzgerald is the biggest impact player in the CIAA," Hamler said.

That very well may be true. Few players in the

league have made as big a splash as has Fitzgerald. He needed very little time to adjust to the CIAA after becoming eligible to play for the Vikings. His 23.5 scoring average is tops in the league. He is also first in free throw percentage (83.9) and in 3-pointers made per game (3.5).

With Fitzgerald leading the way, the Vikings have sailed to the top of the CIAA's Eastern Division heading into the final week-end of play. The Vikings are also ranked in the top 25 among the NCAA's Division II programs.

Fitzgerald makes very little of his accomplishments.

"I just try to go out



Barry Hamler

every game and give it my best," he said.

The addition of Fitzgerald to the Vikings' lineup gives the team a legitimate chance of capturing the CIAA Tournament. The Vikings haven't captured a league title since 1981.

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