

SPORTS WEEK

Tenacious defense led Rams to title

From The Press Box

Sam Davis



Photo by Bruce Chapman

Tyrone Thomas steals the ball away from Elizabeth City in the championship game.

Defense wins championships. Always has, always will. If you don't believe that, just ask Elizabeth City State.

The Vikings came into last Saturday night's championship game in the CIAA Tournament with a lot of confidence. The Vikings boasted the league's top scorer in William Fitzgerald and one of the most imposing front lines to play in the league in many years.

The Vikings had little doubt in their minds that they will easily carry home the championship banner after struggling to get past North Carolina Central in the semifinals last Friday night.

With their NBA looking front line and the 6-8 Fitzgerald in the backcourt, the Vikings figured it would be just a matter of time before they headed to center court to pick up the hardware to take back home.

They were a loose bunch as they sang in the corridor leading to the arena. There they stood, looking down at their opponents and seeming to say to the Rams "you guys don't stand a chance".

That's what a lot of people thought about the Rams' chances heading into the tournament. They had a daunting task after finishing in a tie for the division and winding up with the CIAA's Western Division No. 2 seed.

But after the dust settled on the playing floor of the LJV, it was the Rams who stood in the winner's circle. And like the Rams opponent the previous night, the Vikings were still trying to figure out how they ended up with one of their worst offensive shooting nights of the season.

Although they refused to give Coach Rick Duckett and the Rams proper credit for shutting them down with a variety of defenses, that was

the story of the game. Just as it had been in WSSU's 66-50 win over Virginia Union the previous night, the Rams had wreaked havoc with the

See Press Box on B3

'Bighouse' Gaines watches from wings as Rams capture CIAA championship

By DAMON FORD
THE CHRONICLE

The Winston-Salem State University mens basketball team had just won the 1999 CIAA tournament championship and in the midst of the celebratory bedlam stood a proud Clarence "Bighouse" Gaines.

Wearing a red blazer, similar to the one worn by Rams' coach and hometown boy Rick Duckett, Gaines gushed with jubilation and was clearly enamored in the moment.

The last time he had experienced this feeling was 22 years ago as a coach himself.

"It's been so long, but you're always happy when you win," Gaines said. "I think you can see the fans have got themselves into it. They believe in the (program) and they believe in Rick Duckett and they believe we're back on our winning ways now."

"Winning?"

That's a word that hasn't been paired with the men's basketball team in quite some time. As a matter of fact you have to go back to the late 80s to find a winning Rams' team.

But did it have to take so long for WSSU fans to taste success again? The legendary coach doesn't think so.

"The secret to winning in athletics is personnel," Gaines



Gaines

said. "Great players make great coaches. (Duckett) had good players, last year (Sam Hanger) had good players."

"(The Rams) were right on the brink (of winning a championship), with a little hard work, improvement in technique and all that sort of thing. You could see tonight that (Duckett) had worked that trapping defense kept Elizabeth City off balance all night."

Before Duckett had taken over the reins of the Rams this season, the men's basketball program had been floundering.

Gaines, who had coached the team for 48 years and amassed 826 wins had struggled to field competitive teams in his last few years before stepping

See Gaines on B5

Bowie State wins Women's CIAA Tourney title for third year in row

By DAMON FORD
THE CHRONICLE

Once... twice... three times a champion.

That's what can be said about the Ladies of Bowie State. The Lady Bulldogs once again took home the championship trophy.

With Rashida Brooks supplying the firepower, Bowie State captured the 1999 CIAA Tournament Championship for the third consecutive year by beating Fayetteville State University 71-55.

The Bulldogs, who beat the Broncos 61-36 in the 1997 tournament final, joined former CIAA member Norfolk State University as the only schools to win the championship in three consecutive years.

Powered by the 20-point, 15-rebound and six block effort of CIAA Women's Player of the Year and tournament MVP Brooks, Bowie held the Broncos to 28 percent shooting for the

game and forced 30 turnovers.

"We were determined to play Fayetteville man-to-man for 40 minutes," said Coach Ed Davis of Bowie State. "I think at the beginning of the game the defense caused them to do some things they normally don't do."

Sonja Walker of the Broncos, who was coming off a 15-point, 15-rebound performance against North Carolina Central in the semi-finals, struggled to get untracked against the inside trio of Brooks (6-5) and Trenita Shields (6-0) and Deidra Fields (6-2).

The 6-2 senior was held to two points on one of six shooting and three rebounds while Brooks, Shields and Fields roamed the middle freely to combine for 19 points and 12 boards.

While Bowie's inside game flourished their perimeter game was non-existent. All totaled the Bulldog guards and wing

players shot three for 14 in the first half, which became a factor in a three and half minute scoring drought that gave the scrappy Broncos some life.

FSU, known for its full court press kept the pressure on Bowie and was able to get within three points, 31-28 at the break behind Marian Moore's 10 points.

Davis was more than a little upset at his teams play in the first 20 minutes. They shot a porous 35 percent from the field and went away from their low post game.

As a matter of fact Davis had a few choice words in the Bulldog locker room that lit a fire under the two-time defending champions and got them rolling after the break, much to the chagrin of Bronco's coach Eric Tucker.

"We felt pretty good about where we were at the half," said Tucker. "In the second half the

See CIAA Women on B3



Photo by Bruce Chapman

Rashida Brook's inside power was too much for Fayetteville State.

O'Kelly, Wake Forest at top of game as Deacons enter ACC Tournament

By SAM DAVIS
THE CHRONICLE

With his team's post-season aspirations weighing in the balance, Robert O'Kelly of Wake Forest pieced together the best two-game stretch of his career last week.

A national audience looked on as O'Kelly scored a career-high 32 points when the Deacons battled North Carolina to a standoff in regulation before dropping a 68-65 overtime decision to the Tarheels in Chapel Hill.

O'Kelly then stepped up last Sunday in the Deacons' regular season finale. He scored 24 points to help the Deacons take a lopsided, 72-45, victory over North Carolina State. The victory allowed the Deacons to secure fourth place in the ACC's regular season standings and boost Wake

Forest to an upper echelon finish.

The win didn't guarantee the Deacons a berth in the NCAA Tournament field, but it did serve notice that Wake Forest is a team to watch in this week's ACC Tournament in Charlotte. The Deacons will face the Wolfpack in a rematch on Friday needing a win to earn a slot in the tournament field.

O'Kelly said the Deacons came out on Sunday with a purpose.

"We pretty much knew what we had to do," O'Kelly said. "We wanted to close out the season with a win and we had to focus on what we were doing. We came out fast and made some shots and things just started to go our way. There are days like this when whatever you do goes well for you."

Coach Dave Odom tried to



O'Kelly

downplay the blowout win.

"There's no way that we're that much better than State," Odom said. "I think we're two evenly matched teams and today was just our day and things just went well for us."

However, he couldn't hide the fact that the Deacons had their way with the Wolfpack and put

See O'Kelly on B3

Loss to WSSU in CIAA Tournament semis means Virginia Union snubbed by NCAA

By SAM DAVIS
THE CHRONICLE

How times have changed!

When the NCAA Division II playoffs begin tonight, Virginia Union will be sitting on the sideline watching for only the third time in 21 years since Coach Dave Robbins took over the Panthers' basketball program.

The Panthers, who have claimed 10 CIAA Tournament championships, 13 regular season CIAA titles, five NCAA Division II regional crowns and two National Championships, was left out of the field of 48 teams announced last Sunday by the selection committee.

The Panthers went into last week's CIAA championship as the favorite to come away with the trophy. However, Union slipped against Winston-Salem State in the semifinals and was



William Davis

knocked out of the tournament by the Rams, who went on to win

the title.

Robbins said his team didn't play well in the tournament's quarterfinal round victory over Bowie State and that was the beginning of his team's troubles.

"I didn't think we played well (against Bowie)," Robbins said. "We didn't shoot the ball well and we didn't have much intensity."

It got even worse against Winston-Salem State. The Panthers made only 18 of 54 shots from the field. The Rams, switching up defenses nearly every few possessions up the court, outplayed the larger Panthers. WSSU finished the game with 44 rebounds to Union's 28. The Rams also had the upper hand in field goal shooting and free throw shooting. WSSU made 21 of 50 shots from the field, but the difference was at the line where the Rams

See Union on B3