

Press Box

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 Vikings' shooting percentages.
 "We threw everything we had at them," Duckett said. "We wanted to give them a good dose of all our defenses."

The Rams rotated between a full-court man-to-man, 2-2-1 full-court press and 3-2 half-court zone. WSSU broke the Vikings' offensive rhythm by catching ECSU off-guard. With only one proven ball-handler in the game, the Vikings were easy prey for the Rams. WSSU was able to trap the Vikings and then get in the passing lanes to pick off their passes. That strategy helped the Rams to get into their running game and by halftime they were out to a 38-31 lead.

Instead of getting better at solving the Rams pressure, the Vikings got worse in the second half. Once again Duckett made adjustments at the half. This time the Rams' "amoeba" defenses kept the Vikings off-balance and the Rams were the ones having a fun time. Before the Vikings could catch their breath the Rams had taken their biggest lead of the game at 62-39, with 10:55 left in the game.

A television timeout was the only thing that could stop the Rams' charge. Coach Barry Hamler of ECSU must have said something to finally speak to the urgency of the situation. When the Vikings returned to the court they played like a fire had been lit under them.

Elizabeth City cut into the Rams' lead and worked it down to seven points on Che' Lugo's short jumper with 2:47 to play. But the Rams' defense and defense bailed them out. The Vikings managed only one more field goal the rest of

the way and the Rams hit 21 of 22 free throws to seal the win.

By doing so, they resurrected memories of the past when Coach Bighouse Gaines' team stood in the winner's circle on a regular basis. It was an emotional time for Duckett.

"My first thoughts were of my brother," said Duckett, whose brother Kenny Duckett (former Wake Forest and NFL player) passed away last summer after a long bout with diabetes. "I was thinking about how the last time I was here and Kenny was here watching us play. He was always there to support me."

For much of the tournament, it looked like the Rams just might have a guardian angel looking down upon them. After failing to reach the tournament championship game in 21 previous tries, few people gave them a chance of getting there this season, despite their strong finish in the league.

Then it looked like the tournament pairings were stacked against them. First they had to get past under-achieving St. Paul's, which might have been the league's dark horse. With three-time Player of the Year, Antwaine Smith, and a good supporting cast, the Tigers had all the ingredients to cook up a title.

They showed that against WSSU. St. Paul's gave the Rams all they wanted and appeared to have the game put away twice. But the Rams made the stops that they had to have and Tyrone Thomas' buzzer-beating shots in regulation and in overtime lifted the Rams to victory.

After such a dramatic finish and expending a lot of energy in the post-game celebration, you figured the Rams might be a little flat in their next matchup, against Virginia Union.

The Panthers were the favorites



Tyrone Thomas

coming in and had another incentive on their side. They had fallen victims to the Rams by more than 20 points when the teams met on a previous occasion. Certainly, you figured, the powerful Panthers would want to avenge that lopsided score.

VUU promptly proceeded to take a 10-0 lead and things weren't looking good for the Rams.

But their defense started to click and the Panthers went cold from the field. By the time VUU looked up, the Rams were ahead by a 19-13 and the Panthers had gone 11:29 without scoring.

Union Coach Dave Robbins is a class act, but even he didn't give credit where credit is due.

"Our shooting killed us," he said. "Not taking anything away from them, but we didn't hit our shots. When you're a shooter, you're supposed to make the open shot. I thought we had some open looks, but we didn't make them."

Rather than commenting him-

self, Robbins might have been wise to let William

Davis do the talking. The senior guard had his worst game ever in the tournament in his two-year career. Last year Davis was named to the all-tournament team after scoring 92 points in three games. Against the Rams he scored 18. However, he made only five of 21 field goals and connected on only two of 10 3-pointers.

If that isn't testament to the defensive ability of the Rams, consider the fact that as a team Union was 18 of 54 from the field.

Elizabeth City fared about the same. The Vikings had a season-low of 22 field goals in the game, on 59 attempts. In two games, with everything on the line, the Rams held their opponents to a combined total of 40 field goals on 113 attempts (.354). When you stop the opposition that frequently, championships have a way of finding you.

CIAA Women

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 wheels just came off."

After the break Bowie came out like gangbusters and broke a close game wide open with a 20-4 run. Brooks and junior Beverly Winstead combined for 16 points on a variety of lay-ups and several trips to the charity stripe.

By the time the smoke cleared the Bulldogs lead 53-32 and held a 21 point edge with 12:44 left.

"We wanted to get out on top (in the second half) fast," Brooks said. "Me and Beverly, being captains have to put the team on our shoulders. All we could do is play basketball."

But Tucker and his Broncos were not ready to throw in towel. After a 20 second timeout, FSU continued to do what they always do well-press.

"We've always pressed," Tucker said. "It's helter skelter but it gets the job done."

After two Moore free throws the Broncos trimmed

Bowie's lead down to nine with four minutes to go.

But the Bulldogs held FSU to four points while draining seven of 10 from the free throw line the rest of the way.

Joining Brooks in double figures for the Bulldogs was Winstead with 15 points, three assist and three steals while Shields finished with 10 points, eight boards, four assist and two assist.

The Broncos (16-12) were lead by Moore's 19 points and Shaunici Morgan's 10 points.

All-Tournament team honors with to the Bulldogs' Brooks, Shields and Tiffany Moss along with the Broncos' Moore and Walker.

Rounding out the team was Christa West of Winston-Salem State University, Amba Kongo of North Carolina Central University, Livingstone College's Erica Deas, Virginia Union's Norfortiria Grant and Lawanna Davis of Johnson C. Smith University.



Beverly Winstead of Bowie State takes the ball to the basket against Fayetteville State.

Union

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 made 19 of 27. The Panthers only got to the line 13 times and made nine of them.

Robbins said his team couldn't convert on its opportunities.

"We didn't score against them and we had to change personnel," Robbins said. "We had a bad showing Thursday night (in the quarterfinals) and I think that carried over some tonight. Our shooting killed us. Not taking anything away from them (WSSU), but we didn't hit our shots. When you're a shooter, you're supposed to make the open shot. I thought we had some open looks."

After struggling from the field against Bowie, Robbins went with a three-guard offense. The Panthers jumped out to a 10-0 lead to start the game. But it was all down hill from there. Union went 11:29 without scoring and the Rams were able to work their lead up to 19-13 before the Panthers

Kadiri Richard converted a free throw. VUU didn't score a field goal until a minute later when Sadiki Tingling scored on a short jumper. Winston-Salem State led by a 28-19 lead at the end of the half.

William Davis fueled a comeback attempt in the opening minutes of the second half and the Panthers closed the gap to 42-39 with 9:38 left in the game. However, they were unable to move any closer and the Rams stretched their lead in the game's final minutes.

Union was ice cold from the field after Davis' 3-pointer at the 7:47 cut the margin to 49-44. The Panthers missed 11 of their final 13 shots.

By the same token, WSSU wasn't exactly scorching the nets. The Rams made only 21 of 50 shots (.420) for the game.

"I thought we did a good job against them defensively until the late in the game," Robbins said. "We just didn't shoot the ball well."

Davis, Union's leading scorer,

closed out his career on a sour note. After helping lead the team to the Panthers regular season and tournament championship, Davis had one of his worst days at VUU. He hit five of 21 field

goals, including only two of 10 3-pointers. He was the only Union player in double figures with 18 points. Michael Martin and Chandar Bingham were next with eight points.



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O'Kelly

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 themselves in position to earn a berth in the NCAA's.

"I think we have a very good chance," Odom said. "I believe the NCAA selection committee will take four or five teams. We certainly hope they will because that improves our chances of getting in."

O'Kelly said all he and his teammates can do is play basketball and not worry about the other aspects.

"That's something we really

can't worry about," he said. "We just want to go out and play basketball. I think we have a lot of confidence going into the tournament and we want to have a chance in the tournament. Right now I feel like we're playing very good basketball."

"That was the key today," he added. "We came out and executed and that got us out to a big lead. When you come out like that you know it's going to be a big day. Hopefully we'll have more of them before this season is over."