

A&T Aggies win Circle City Classic

CHRONICLE STAFF REPORT

Another nickname is in order for Indianapolis. It's Aggietown.

The N.C. A&T football team has played in the Circle City Classic in Indianapolis three times and each time the Aggies have come back to Greensboro victorious. The Aggies used a stingy defense and a ball-control offense to defeat Tennessee State 16-3 in front of 42,310 at the RCA Dome.

Quante Speight was named Offensive MVP. He had 111 yards on 18 carries. But it was the defense that was most valuable Saturday.

"Traditionally, we've always been strong defensively," said N.C. A&T head coach George Small. "I saw us getting a little better last week. We put it all together this week. We're going to need that same kind of intensity going into the conference."

The Circle City Classic versus Tennessee State marked the Aggies' final nonconference game of the season. The Aggies will begin playing MEAC teams exclusively starting with Morgan State at FedEx Field in the Prince George's Classic on Saturday.

Before going after MEAC championship No. 7, the Aggies needed to end a two-game slide and halt a slow 1-3 start. They bounced back with another solid defensive performance. After giving up 28 points to Hampton in the first 18 minutes of the game two weeks ago, the Aggies' defense has looked sharp.

They held Elon to just 48 yards passing last week, and on



Members of the Aggie football team and coach George Small pose with the Circle City Classic trophy after their 16-3 win over Tennessee State last Saturday.

Saturday the Aggies forced a season-high five turnovers, scored once and allowed the Tigers to convert only two third downs. The Aggies had not forced that many turnovers since October 11, 2003, in a win over Morgan State.

"When the defense is playing that well, the last thing you want to do is turn the ball over," said N.C. A&T quarterback Rico

Watkins, who made his first start since Nov. 29, 2003, because of a foot injury he sustained during the 2004 season. "Our coaching staff always tells to make the smart play. I thought I took too many sacks tonight, but other than that we wanted to make sure we didn't mess up what they had going tonight."

First-team All-MEAC defen-

sive end Rickie Lewis put an exclamation point on the Aggies' defensive showing by scooping up a bouncing ball and taking it 70 yards for an Aggies touchdown. As Tigers gained on him and as he tired on his way to the end zone, Lewis looked up at the RCA Dome Jumbo Tron to get an idea of how best to score. Lewis' score gave the Aggies a 16-0 lead with

11:45 remaining in the first half.

"I was just in the right place at the right time," Lewis said about the fumble. "When I got close (to the end zone), I saw them gaining on me, so I made a move to make sure I scored. I don't know why I looked up. I guess I didn't want to get caught."

More defense followed as Theron Thomas ended two promising drives for the Tigers by intercepting passes deep in N.C. A&T territory. From there, the Aggies slowed the game down in the second half. They chose to let the defense continue to stifle the Tigers' offense, while the Aggies' offense took time off the clock. Watkins passed the ball twice in the second half.

Tennessee State's deepest penetration came in the fourth quarter. On a third-and-9 from the Aggies 21-yard line, Richard Hartman connected with Gerald Morrow on a short pass. Aggies linebacker Orlando Norman came flying across the field and stopped Morrow from getting a first down, stopping him 1-yard shy. The Tigers settled for a 30-yard Eric Benson field goal, ending the Aggies' chance at a shutout for the first time in two years.

"We played a whole game today (Saturday) - offense, defense and special teams," Lewis said. "That's probably the first time we've done that all year. It's a good time to start doing that with all of our conference games coming up."

Indianapolis might be the place to schedule those conference games.

Bobcats single-game tickets on sale Saturday

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Charlotte Bobcats single-game tickets for the 2005-06 season will go on sale Saturday at 10 a.m.

Fans may purchase tickets by visiting BobcatsBasketball.com, calling 704-BOBCATS or at the Blumenthal Ticket Center (located in Founders Hall). Tickets for all games start as low as \$10.

The Bobcats will play their first game in Charlotte Bobcats Arena on Nov. 5, against Boston, and continue a four-game home stand against Utah (Nov. 7), defending NBA champion San Antonio (Nov. 9) and Dallas (Nov. 11).

Charlotte will host a six-game home stand from Jan. 30 through Feb. 10 - including contests against LeBron James and Cleveland (Jan. 30), Marvin Williams and Atlanta (Feb. 1), Kobe Bryant and the Los Angeles Lakers (Feb. 3), and Allen Iverson and Philadelphia (Feb. 8) - and six of eight games in Charlotte Bobcats Arena from March 6 to March 21.

The first matchup of the season against a Southeast Division rival will come on Nov. 26, when Washington visits Charlotte. Orlando will come to the Queen City on Jan. 20 and March 21, and Atlanta will travel north on Feb. 1 and March 28.

Miami and Shaquille O'Neal will make their first appearance in Charlotte on Jan. 27 and return on March 6. The Wizards also will play in Charlotte on March 14.

All Bobcats home games will begin at 7:30 p.m., with the exception of the Sunday, April 2, game against Cleveland, which will begin at 6 p.m., and an afternoon contest on Monday, Jan. 16, against Chris Paul and the New Orleans/Oklahoma City Hornets at 1 p.m. on Martin Luther King Jr. Day.

For information on becoming a Bobcats season ticket holder, call 704-BOBCATS or visit BobcatsBasketball.com. The Charlotte Bobcats organization includes the Charlotte Bobcats (NBA), the Charlotte Sting (WNBA) and Charlotte Bobcats Arena, opening in October 2005.

Stone

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Most girls are better at sports than boys."

Stone has definitely earned the respect of her teammates and coaches. Head coach Julius "Jukie" Minor said that he couldn't believe how equipped and ready she was for football.

"She's a very important part of this team," Minor said. "She hits the boys hard, and she takes some hard licks (hits). She's definitely the most disciplined person on the team. If she's late, she'll volunteer to run the hills. And she does a lot of the things you won't hear about really well - like she's sprung free a lot of good runs. She's a great blocker. You just wouldn't expect for her to be so physical."

"When I first saw her I thought she was going to be a cheerleader," Minor continued. "I was told that we had a girl, but I was expecting sort of a bigger girl. I definitely wasn't expecting such a cute, little girl. But she plays like the boys when she puts those pads on. We're going to try to work her in a little more. We'd like to make her to be the first girl to score for the Tiny Indians."

Stone is already the first girl to play with the Tiny Indian organization. But before

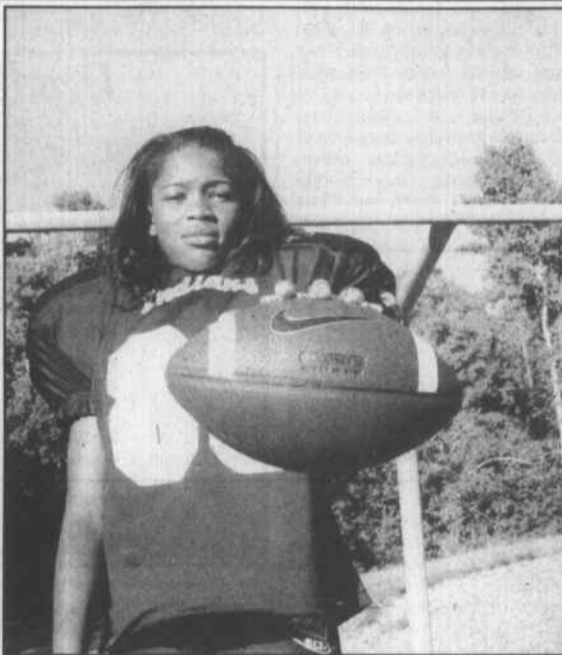


Photo by Anthony Hill

Stone wanted to prove that girls can be just as tough as boys.

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she was even able to sign up, her mother made a bet with her.

"She asked me if I would let her play if she made the honor roll," said LaShonda Stone, her mother. "Me and her made a bet. She ended up making the honor roll, and I let her play. I was scared at first, but I prayed about it."

Tiny Indian head representative Leonard Green added: "I remember when her mom said she wanted to play. I was like, 'Are you sure, sweetie?' She said that she was, and she's done great ever since. I mean, she's just a great individual, on and off the field.

I'm very pleased with the way she has made the transition with the boys, and they've done the same thing with her."

Stone, who has a 3.7 grade point average, also plays basketball. Even though she's doing big things on the football field, she has bigger plans for herself on the basketball court.

"She wants to become a lawyer one day," LaShonda Stone said, "but she also wants to play basketball. She told me she wants to be the first female out of Winston-Salem to make it to the WNBA."

Anything is possible.

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