Whatever the reason, being selected as a free agent rather than a high draft pick is costly -- for the player.

A first-round draft pick in the NFL can expect a signing bonus of up to \$300,000 as well as a starting salary of around \$200,000.

On the other hand, the typical free agent is lucky to be paid a \$5,000 bonus and a \$50,000 starting salary.

NFL scouts are quick to say there is a reason to this madness; they insist they aren't using black colleges as a vehicle for cheap talent.

"What I look at," says Dallas Cowboys scout John Wooten, "is a player who can come into the league and play four or five years. You have just filling gaps."

Wooten has had to make a number of clutch judgments. After traveling to Grambling to watch Everson Walls play, he marveled over Walls' athletic ability, then advised the Cowboys that Walls should not be drafted.

The culprit? Speed.

"If you saw our game against New York the other day, you know what I mean," Wooten said. "Everson got" beat a couple of times, and both times it was because he lacked foot speed."

Some people would not consider that to be a very big deal. So what if Walls can't outrun a speeding bullet? The bottom line is the man gets the job

The NFL has to be hard-nosed, though. Football is a business, and NFL clubs cannot afford to alter their standards. If the computer printout suggests a player is too slow, too small or too inexperienced, then the teams are smart to pass on that player. After all, that's what the free agent system is for -- to catch the players who fall through the cracks.

All in all, it does indeed appear that the NFL is fair and equitable in its drafting policies. And, with regard to black colleges, the size of a player's college does not mean as much as the size of his talent.

The Cowboys, for example, drafted Kentucky State cornerback Rod Hill in the first round a few years ago, shocking many in the league. Hill never worked out for the Cowboys and was subsequently traded. Despite that, his being drafted so high showed that pro teams will go with what they feel are the best players, regardless of the players' school or background.

There is, however, one knock against the players who play on the Division I-AA OF Division II level:

"You are talking about how much time the player has spent in meetings, how many times he has played in front of crowds of 50,000-plus, how many

times he has played against quality op-Deacon Jones was considered not ex- the competition. Says Denver Broncos position. At a large school, a team might have 11 coaches. At a small school, a team might have four. All that makes a difference."

> But the bottom line seems to be raw talent. Some players may slip through

the cracks, but the best are drafted. Says Philadelphia Eagles scout Jackie Graves:

"It doesn't matter where a player goes to school. The important thing for him is to get an education. If he is a football player, we'll find him."

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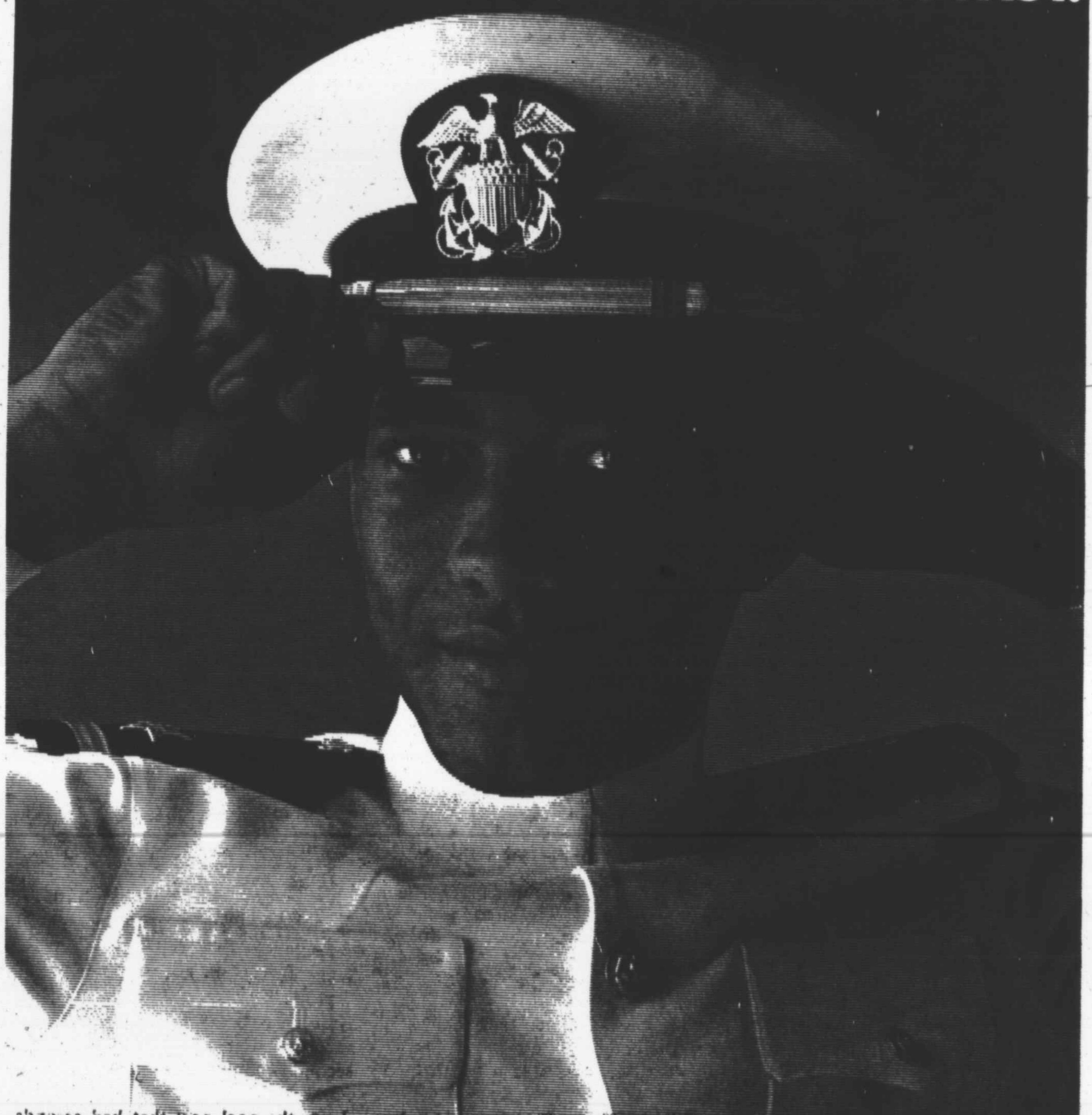
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Somebody up there has to be a Spartan fan

By SAM DAVIS

You figure it out.

The CIAA football championship game between Winston-Salem State and Norfolk State was supposed to have been a battle between nationallyranked running attacks. After all, it seemed the logical thing to do. Both teams take to the ground like Bubba Smith takes to Lite beer -- and neither had shown strong passing games in the past. In fact, Norfolk's passing attack was supposed to be pitiful, if it existed

So, naturally, both teams filled the air with footballs.

In a game full of drama, emotion, irony and defense, Norfolk State and WSSU played out of character. They showed a lot of character, too.

The Rams' usually potent running game faltered, as did the Spartans' ground attack. Passing and one, fateful bounce of the football determined the game's outcome.

As in most big games, the key was momentum. Big Mo ebbed and flowed constantly enough to keep both the players and the 17,000 spectators on

While Norfolk enjoyed the upper hand for most of the first half, the Rams came back strong late in the second, and it wasn't until Tyrone Smith's 37-yard field goal attempt hi Foreman Field's Astroturf with 23 going," said Hayes, referring to the 5-10, 175-pound Mike Winbush. The "On their field goal attempt in the seconds left that Norfolk had dodged Rams' last-gasp effort. "We showed a loss was a heartbreaker for the final seconds, I turned my back and, the bullet for its first league title since lot of character the way we played." diminutive signal-caller, who almost when the crowd roared, I turned 1976, 20-19.

Smith's kick, which came within inches of giving the Rams the win, who started at quarterback in place of Winbush, a fifth-year senior who was a great feeling." two teams were.

shame that someone had to lose in a Norfolk its margin of victory. game like this. The score truly reveals how close the game really was.

"We knew that it would be a hardfought contest," said Bailey, who enjoyed about as storybook a season in of because they played a fine football Winston-Salem had a good run defense CIAA for the caliber of football teams we have."

say about his team's effort, having lost action passes to get their defensive yet another game to Bailey, an old backs to come up," he said. "Once we success." After watching the final CIAA nemesis who routed him last did that, we were able to get behind year for the league title while coaching them." Virginia Binton:

"I thought we had the momentum performance by Winston-Salem's fiery earlier thwarted Smith's effort. character of Norfolk's Willie Gillus, game offensively.

Winston-Salem State quarterback Mike Winbush played the game of his life - but it wasn't enough (photo by

epitomized how evenly-matched the the injured Raynard Revels, that told passed up winter baseball and a con- The win was especially gratifying for the story of the game. Gillus siderable salary increase with the Texas Bailey, who took a team that had "Somebody else must have wanted engineered an almost-perfect 14-play, Rangers to return to Winston-Salem, finished a mediocre 5-5 in 1983 to a us to win this game," said winning 78-yard drive that resulted in a 30-yard played the finest game of his career. conference crown and 10-2 record in Coach Willard Bailey. "It was just a field goal by Dale Browder and gave His stats, impressive enough in their only one year. During that drive, Norfolk had to re- and a touchdown), didn't accurately pionship I've ever had," said Bailey, as ly on the pinpoint passing of Gillus, a reflect the type of day he had against strong-armed junior who was able to the Spartans.

connect with surprising success. "Coming into the game, we knew waning moments, when he led the heroic effort all season. '84 as a first-year head coach at his that we would have to pass to win," Rams from their own 6-yard line to the "They had to learn a completely new alma mater can have. "Winston said Gillus, who was named the game's Spartan 20. When Smith's field goal offense and defense, but they never doesn't have anything to be ashamed outstanding player. "We knew that hit the goal post, Winbush wept softly. gave up."

"Their whole defense was based on Ram Coach Bill Hayes had little to stopping the run and we needed play-

James Parker).

through the air.

own right (20 of 32 passes for 220 yards

"I thought it was good," said Winbush, who looked on in disbelief when Smith's kick hit the upright. "This really hurts; it hurts completely."

Norfolk's team and fans were equally stunned at the Spartans' newfound seconds tick off the clock, Norfolk faithful stormed the field, tearing down the goal post that had seconds

However, it was the poise and single-handedly kept the Rams in the around and saw the ball come down and hit the upright," said Gillus. "It

"This is the most fulfilling chamhe was swarmed by autograph-seekers after the game. "These guys had to And he saved his best for the game's start from scratch and just gave a

Bailey said he was especially proud of the way his team fought back after. 🕶 being down 19-17 in the fourth

"We had to score and we had to score on that drive," said Bailey. "But it wasn't too much different from what we've done all season. When our backs have been against the wall, we've