Ellington leaps at the Globetrotter challenge

By CRAIG T. GREENLEE Review Staff Writer

When the Harlem Globetrotters offered Russell Ellington their head coaching job, he leaped at the opportunity, leaving his post at Savannah State right before the Tigers were to begin pre-season practice for the 1985-86 campaign.

Ellington made the move because it presented him with a new challenge, he

"It was an expansion move for me," Ellington says. "The Globetrotters were obviously having some problems, just like Savannah State did when I first took the job there. But right now, this is a new challenge for me. I think that, when coaches stop accepting challenges, then maybe they should get out of coaching."

Challenges aside, money was also a prime factor in the former Tiger coach leaving. Ellington openly admits that, in all of his previous positions, "the dollar was always the biggest problem."

His salary, which he says is far above what any college can afford to pay, "gives me the chance to not even have to worry about money."

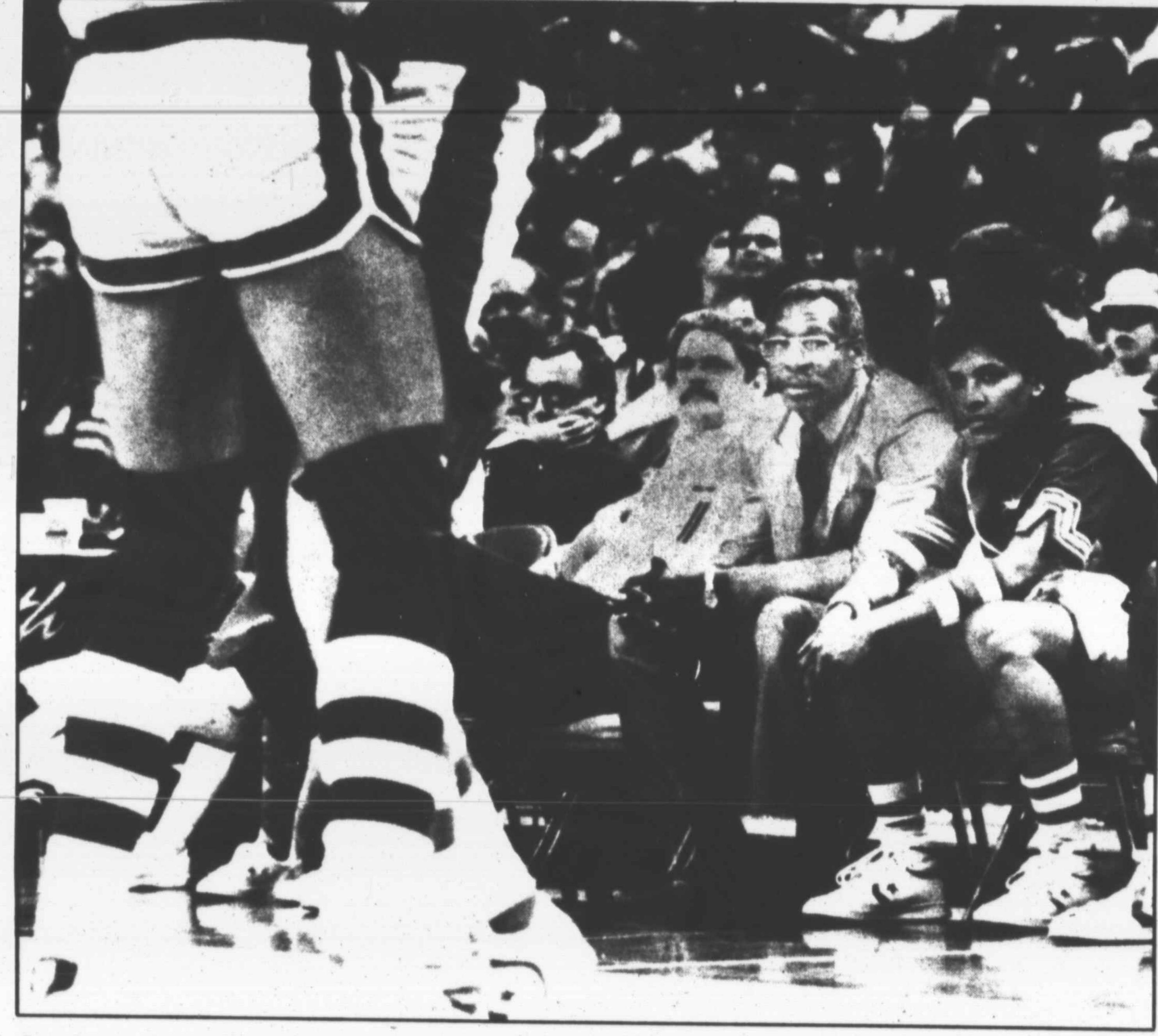
The new job, Ellington adds, provides him with the opportunity to do things for his family that he hadn't been able to do previously. "I think that anybody in that situation would probably take that chance," he says, "especially if it's something that you like to do."

As the guiding force on the sidelines for the Globetrotters, Ellington feels his new post isn't that much different from his role in prior coaching positions. He's doing most of the same things he did at Savannah State to prepare his team to play, he says.

"Once I hit training camp, it's all basketball," Ellington says. "But, once the season starts, the difference is the type of people I'm coaching plus the travel and playing every night. That's pretty tough to get used to."

anywhere from 170 to 200 games on three-year contract when he took the unless we're six points up. They don't their American tour. If there's an job, but declined because he wants to realize that we go through the same overseas tour, there are even more see how he likes the position for the type of training camp as other profesgames, more bag-packing, airplane first year before he commits himself rides and hotel sightseeing.

Ellington took a leave of absence from Savannah State when he accepted the Globetrotters' offer. At this point, he hasn't decided what action he'll take on that leave. "I'll decide when the season is over (late April)," he says.



Globetrotter Coach Russell Ellington watches his team from the bench along with the first lady Trotter, Lynette Woodard (photo by Craig Greelee).

faces this year, among them Lynette Woodard, their first woman player. know it. The results, so far, have been pleasing. Attendance is up, and the Trotters' show has new zip and spontaneity.

Ellington watches the game from his spot on the bench, offers a few suggestions and looks generally comfortable Absolutely. The Trotters play in his new role. He was asked to sign a quarter, we will not do anything funny any further.

Globetrotter basketball is fun to watch and definitely in keeping with the team's reputation as ambassadors of good will. However, there has been sentiment that Globetrotter basketball isn't serious basketball. Is that a cor-The Globetrotters have entered their rect assessment? "No," Ellington says the comedy that is their patented ment. That is the assessment given to impact on the team, Ellington says. trademark. But they feature some new our game by some people who have

looked at the game and don't really

"It could very well be a fun game. The way we play, we have fun doing it he adds, "you have to be careful combecause it makes so many people laugh and we touch so many people's lives that way. But the average person doesn't realize that, after the first

Ellington says the team doesn't work on its bag of tricks until the last two days of camp. Also, the Washington Generals, (the Trotters' rivals on their tour), don't take part in their training camp. This way, everyone always has to earn his or her job each year.

As for the addition of Woodard to 60th year, and they still are masters of flatly, "that is not a correct assess- the Globetrotters, it has had a positive

Having Woodard around adds a

"nice touch" to the team, he says, and everyone has become accustomed to having her around. "But sometimes," ing in and out of the locker room. What happens is that a guy is used to going in and just undressing and relaxing. Then all of a sudden she pops in."

But that's been corrected as the men are more aware of how they talk when she's around and even how they dress sometimes, the coach says. "That's been a big help to all of us."

Elllington is pleased with Woodard's play, for the most part, but is trying to get her to tone her inside game down some, mainly to reduce the chances of injury. "She has tremendous ability," he says, "but I have to make her aware that she can't go inside and challenge those big people all the time. We don't want her to get banged up with all the games we have to play. If she would

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MEAC REPORT

Howard-A&T bad blood will boil in tournament

By JIM TROTTER Special To The Review

For the past four years, North Carolina A&T has held a virtual lock on the Mid-Eastern Athletic Conference's postseason championship tournament -- a reality archrival Howard hasn't enjoyed living with.

Following last year's heartbreaking 71-69 championship game loss to A&T, Howard Coach A.B. Williamson lamented, "I'm tired of finishing second. It's the same old story. North Carolina A&T goes to the NCAA playoffs, and we go home."

This year, however, Howard may finally overtake the Aggies as the new powerhouse in the MEAC. The Bison took their first step toward unseating the perennial champs when they defeated the Aggies 67-59 at Howard on Jan. 11.

A&T and Howard have dominated the MEAC since its inception 15 years ago. During that period, only three other teams (Maryland Eastern Shore, Morgan State and South Carolina State) have won titles. Since 1981, the Howard-A&T battles in the MEAC's postseason tournament became fullscale wars, primarily because that was the first year in which the winner received an automatic berth in the NCAA Tournament.

One, therefore, can understand why Williamson was less than ecstatic this season after his team broke a five-game losing streak against the Aggies.

"I feel good about beating A&T and getting the first league win," said Williamson, quickly adding, "If this was the last game of the year in the tournament, then I would be really excited. But this is only the first (league

"A.B. has a good ballclub," said A&T Coach Don Corbett following the game. "It is experienced and deep. This is our rebuilding time ... and we've got to deal with it. We're going to lose some battles, but I hope we don't lose the war in the end. That's what we're looking for."

many wars. Since the MEAC received by Brian Branch-Price). an automatic berth in the NCAA Tournament, A&T and Howard have played each year for the right to go to the NCAAs.

Howard won the conference's first automatic berth in 1981, thanks primarily to former MEAC players of the year James Ratiff (1980) and Larry Spriggs (1981). Corbett responded with his own players of the year in Joe Binion (1982-84) and Eric Boyd (1985) ppg). But the Bison still have a bitter and all-MEAC guard Jimmy Brown, while running off four straight vic- championship loss.

In action from two years ago, Howard's Derek Caracciolo contests a shot by A&T's James Horace (photo "The loss last year was in the back like them as people off the court, but

tories against Howard in the championship game.

This year, Howard has perhaps its deepest ballclub ever. The Bison are led by juniors Fred Hill (14.2 ppg), Derek Caracciolo (14 blocks), Robert McIlwaine (5.5 rebounds per game) and senior forward Mike Hampton (12.3 taste in their mouths from last year's

Robert Jones following the Bison's vic-

"When you lose to one team so many times, you tend to build up bad blood," said Williamson.

"There's always some intensity to beat A&T," said Howard team captain Derek Caracciolo. "We just don't like each other on the basketball court. We

of my mind," said senior reserve on the court we don't like A&T. There's just bad blood over the years and I think it will continue and just build the rivalry and make the games more exciting."

> Adding a twist to the rivalry last year, the championship tournament was moved from North Carolina to the Palestra in Philadelphia. Before the

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