CIAA TOURNAMENT NOTEBOOK

NCCU: No longer CIAA's Rodney Dangerfield

By DAVID BULLA
Review Staff Writer

North Carolina Central's basketball program has been the laughingstock of the CIAA for nearly two decades.

But not anymore.

Before the season, the CIAA's coaches predicted the NCCU would land in the cellar as it did last season. The Eagles, under first-year Coach **Michael Bernard**, rose from the ashes like a phoenix this season. They came within a game of making the national playoffs for only the second time in school history and posted only their second winning record (14-12) in 17 years.

"There's a new attitude around here," senior forward **Willie Jennette** said. "The big difference is Coach Bernard brought some organization and a sense of purpose to the operation."

Last season, under Interim Coach **Harry Edmonds**, Central posted a 4-21 mark, a typical record for NCCU in the '70s and '80s, during which the school has gone through eight different coaches.

Bernard, formerly an assistant at conference powerhouse Norfolk State, inherited a team that was a hodgepodge of bona fide talent and raw street players. The assortment included Jennette, the 6-foot-8 all-CIAA performer and pro prospect, and several walk-ons Edmonds recruited to fill last season's squad.

"The first thing I had to do was run off about eight or nine guys," Bernard said. "It wasn't a lack of talent so much as attitude."

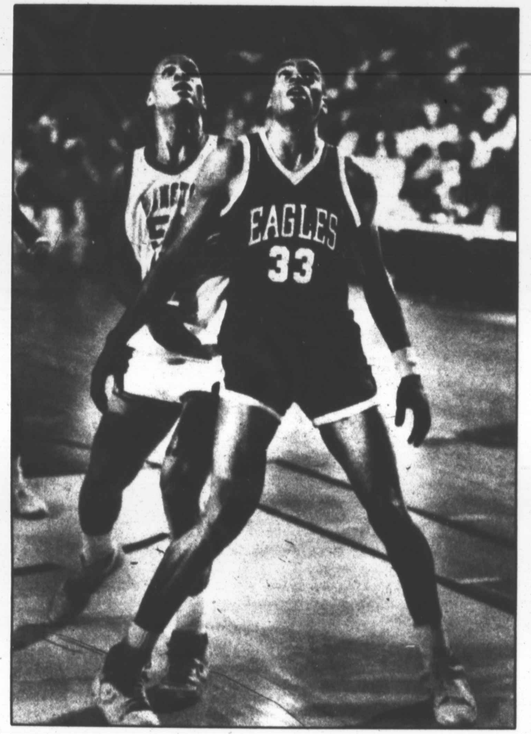
Bernard's first team, which managed a seven-game winning streak late in the regular season, featured a tough man-to-man defense and the strong all-around play of Jennette. The Aurora, N.C., native had some flashy numbers, finishing as the conference's third-leading scorer with a 22.5-point average. He also averaged 8.4 rebounds.

"Coach Bernard came in and got us on the right foot from day one," the soft-spoken Jennette said. "We've kept up those positive attitudes."

Freshman **Thomas Daniels**, twice the CIAA Rookie of the Week, also played a leading role. Daniels averaged 12 points and seven rebounds during the seven-game winning streak.

Central last won the regular-season title in 1957 and the tournament in 1950. Bernard said he didn't have any timetable for putting the Eagles back on top in the CIAA.

"We want to have a standard of excellence," he said. "It may take a while to get back to the top, but look how far we've come in only a year."



NCCU star and pro prospect Willie Jennette (photo by James Parker).

The change of fortune has not been limited to the Central men. The Eagle women, under fourth-year Coach **Yvonne Edwards**, had the best season in the history of the program. They finished with a 14-10 mark -- the first winning record ever by an NCCU women's team. With a young group composed of six freshmen, three sophomores and three juniors, Edwards expects to coach a contender in the Southern Division for the next few years.

One strong reason for Edwards' optimism is **Von Fulmore**, a 5-11 sophomore center who proved to be one of the conference's best players. She finished as the second-leading scorer with a 24.5 average and the top rebounder at 17.7 boards per game. She set single-season school records for most points and rebounds.

So Central may get the last laugh for several seasons to come.

CIAA Tourney Notes

• Perhaps the best part of the CIAA Tournament was the awarding of a $42,000 scholarship fund by a Richmond-based company. Each of the 14 schools in the CIAA will get $3,000 for athletic scholarships ....

• Norfolk State's **Ralph Tally** and Virginia Union's **Jamie Waller**, both juniors, indicated they had not determined whether they will return for their senior seasons. The multi-dimensonal Tally, a three-time all-CIAA selection, and the high-flying Waller, a two-time all-CIAA selection, postponed their decisions until after the current season. Tally averaged 24 points and 5.5 rebounds, while Waller averaged 20 points and nine rebounds ....

• Johnson C. Smith Coach **Robert Moore** saw his son honored as a member of the all-Mecklenburg County basketball squad by the Charlotte, N.C., AAU. **Bobby Moore**, a 6-foot guard, averaged 14 points for North Mecklenburg High School ....

• Among those in attendance at the tournament were former Boston Celtic and Hall of Famer **Sam Jones**, former Detroit Piston **Bob Lanier**, Chicago Bull forward **Charles Oakley** and Boston Red Sox hitting instructor **Al Bumbry**. Jones played and coached at North Carolina Central, Oakley was a star at Virginia Union and Bumbry attended Virginia State. Oakley said he was starting to get more playing time with the Bulls after largely being ignored early in the season. He improved his averages to eight points and seven rebounds per game ....

• A media plaudit goes to **Masaaki Okada** of the *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, whose photograph of Virginia Union's **Jerry Hargrove** dunking and hanging on the rim appeared in the Feb. 28 *Times-Dispatch*. The photo shows Hargrove nearly parallel to the floor. He was assessed a technical foul ....

• Norfolk State Coach **Charles Christian** has a 10-season record of 216-72, winning 75 percent of his games. By way of comparison, North Carolina's **Dean Smith** has won 77 percent of his games in his 25 seasons at Division I powerhouse North Carolina .... The victory for Christian in the CIAA title game at the Richmond Coliseum made for a memorable homecoming. The Norfolk State coach is a Richmond native and played at Armstrong High School under **Maxie Robinson** ....

• Elizabeth City State's **Robert Vaughan**, who was dismissed as the school's athletic director last September, denied this would be his last season at the Northern Division school. Still, he said it was unlikely he'd be around long enough to earn career win No. 600. That would take four outstanding seasons in the conference's tougher division ....

• Vaughan collected career win No. 500 against Norfolk State in the final regular-season game. The 100-95 overtime win came against a Spartan team that was without CIAA Player of the Year **Ralph Tally**, all-CIAA swingman **Barry Mitchell** and center **Darnell Brown**. All three broke a team curfew. They represented a combined average of 47 points per game.

Please See Page 15

CIAA

From Page 14

MEAC Notes

• Coach **Don Corbett** was singing the blues before the season because he had lost a combined average of 35 points per game from the departed **Eric Boyd** and **Jimmy Brown**.

But people like columnist **Wilt Browning** of the *Greensboro News & Record* doubted that Corbett's Aggies would fall on hard times. Browning even wondered if A&T shouldn't be the favorite again in the MEAC, which it won the previous four seasons.

With two weeks to go in the regular season, Corbett's team was peaking but remained two games behind league-leading Howard. It appeared the Aggie coach wasn't going to be on top again, but would finish a comfortable second.

But the Bison lost three of their last four, including a 75-62 loss to A&T in Greensboro. Meanwhile, the torrid Aggies finished with 13 consecutive wins and earned the top seed in the conference tournament.

The most unexpected Bison loss was in the regular-season finale at home to Morgan State. The Bears, 7-19 in the regular season, received a 22-foot corner shot from **Troy Brown** with four seconds left to edge the Bison, 18-9.

It was a case of better late than never for Morgan, which had only one van available to shuttle the men's and women's teams back and forth from Baltimore. Indeed, the Bear men arrived 40 minutes late for their game.

"Never mind the 40-minute wait," Howard Coach **A.B. Williamson** said. "We missed a lot of free throws."

The Bison made 12 of 21 from the line in the loss ....

COMMENTARY

From Page 4

and stay competitive. Alcorn would be just a basketball school.

"Staying in I-AA for scholarship advantages is worth the struggle."

You can best believe it will be a struggle. It always has been.

For years, predominantly white schools have had the best of both worlds. They've been able to work both sides of the street -- recruiting black and white athletes -- while black schools have been recruiting black athletes. Under Proposal 48, that problem will be even more pronounced.

The white schools can still work both sides of the street. But black schools will be up against a double whammy. They can't realistically hope to recruit the top white athletes and the number of available black athletes is shrinking.

A third option is to remain in Division I, recruit non-qualifiers who would have to sit out their freshman years and have three years of eligibility remaining.

"Maybe some schools would be willing to give 10 or 12 scholarships (to non-qualifers)," said Southwestern Athletic Conference Commissioner Dr. James Frank, "but that's a helluva risk."

Tennessee State Coach Bill Thomas said going that route would mean the end of sustained excellence over long periods. Schools would have a couple of good years then a couple of bad ones.

Said Reed: "If you recruit non-predictors, your program is in trouble. You have to recruit quality -- academic quality."

But what do you do when you're caught between a rock and a hard place?

Non-qualifiers would have to pay their own way the first year. That could also preclude black schools from recruiting non-predictors.

"It's very difficult to recruit a blue-chipper knowing he has to sit out and pay his own way," said Reed. "We don't have the resources to have his way paid if he doesn't qualify for a Pell Grant. Others might. We don't have that kind of magic."

Everybody knows who the schools are that do have that magic. They're the same ones we see on TV every holiday season. Some have said they won't sign non-predictors, and they probably meant it when they said it. But a few losing seasons and lost revenue will see a quick change in that song and dance.

"Let there be three or four Herschel Walkers around the country," said Casem. "(They'd) have them (recruiters) around there cheerleading."

The bottom line of Proposal 48 is that the rich will probably get richer -- they'll just do it with less black sweat. Don't look for any drastic changes in who signs the top players.

"I don't really see the biggies not bringing who they want regardless if he qualifies or not," said Casem. "They'll send them to their favorite junior college and bring them back. They have the resources. If they do that, you'll get the same people you've been getting. Kids are going to do the same thing they've been doing."

If that's true, the future doesn't bode well for black college athletes.

"A lot of things will happen," said Frank. "A lot of schools will recruit some who don't qualify. There will be a greater emphasis to tab individuals for junior colleges. More will go to Division II because they want to play football that first year. There's bound to be a decrease in number of black athletes at major colleges for at least three or four years. It'll level off at some point.

"Now that it has passed and we have to live with it, as I see it, we have to make the adjustment. That adjustment is saying to black youngsters, get the grade point in the core curriculum."

There's no question that the spirit of Proposal 48 is good. With it in place, we shouldn't ever have to be confronted with another Kevin Ross, the former Creighton University basketball player who read on the second-grade level after four years of college.

But there's a severe problem when it comes to application.

The NCAA got hot and bothered about the academic aspect of athletics a few years ago when several schools were caught doctoring transcripts. Those are the very schools that Proposal 48 will affect the least. They have the resources to circumvent Proposal 48 and the glamor to attract the bluest of the blue-chip athletes.

Proposal 48 is another example of those who can bear the least having to suffer the most. But that's the way it is when you're caught between a rock and a hard place.

Roscoe Nance is a sportswriter for USA Today *and a regular BSCR columnist.*

SIAC TOURNAMENT

From Page 7

hard to play sometimes," he said.

Brackett, on the other hand, was ecstatic. He'd missed the '85 tournament because of a broken wrist.

"Being a senior, I guess the guys just look up to me," Brackett said. "We just came out hard; we knew it was going to be a hard game, we played hard and we came out on top."

The wrist injury, Brackett said, could have caused a letdown for his team last year. But he recalls telling his teammates early on that 1986 would be *the* year.

The rest is SIAC Tournament history.

Craig T. Greenlee is the editor of Sports Express *in Atlanta.*

PROFILE

From Page 13

colades that have come her way this season, Beale sees room for improvement. "I'll go home this summer and work with my summer coach on my defense," says Beale. "Every summer he (Barney Davis) teaches me something new."

Tyler says she keeps Beale from becoming complacent by staying on her. She adds, "(Beale) is still making sophomore mistakes and some people forget that she is only a sophomore. She is going to be twice as tough to prepare for next year. She's only going to get better."

Which could be a frightening prospect for opponents over the next two years. But Beale is still concentrating on this year. Now that she knows what her capabilities are, she hopes to finish the season as the nation's No. 1 or 2 rebounder and make the all-MEAC team. Her present statistics make those goals very attainable.

Of course, with accolades comes media attention, which Beale is not concentrating on. "She just wants to play," says Tyler. "She doesn't want to be a superstar."

Yet it, like the attention, soon may be unavoidable.

Jim Trotter is a student at Howard University and a freelance writer.