NCAA PLAYOFFS

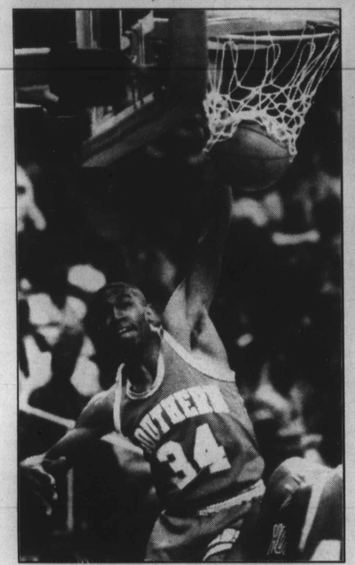

Photo Courtesy of the SWAC

Bobby Phills and his Southern teammates had the pleasure of playing the North Carolina Tar Heels as their reward for winning the SWAC tournament. the Jags were outmanned and the Tar Heels gradually pulled away to forge a sizeable cushion.

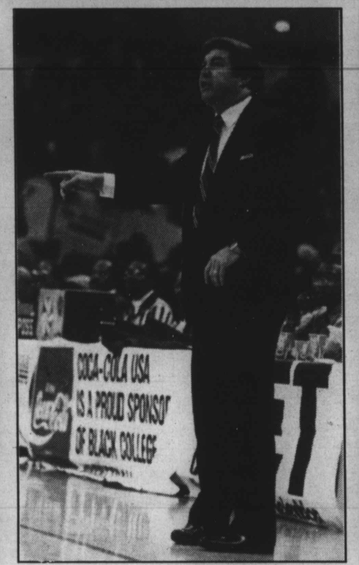

Photo by Max Dunhill

Virginia Union coach Dave Robbins discovered just how tough it is to beat a team three times in one season as N.C. Central emerged victorious in their South Atlantic Regional title game match-up.

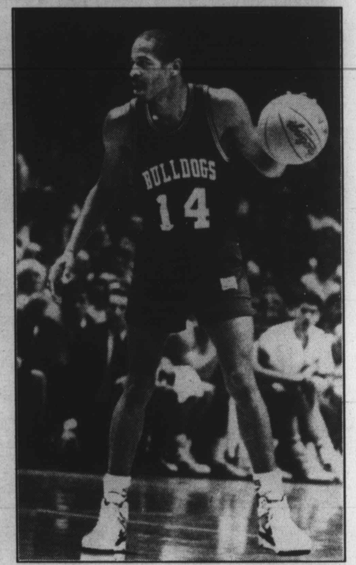

Photo by The Magnificent Eye

Arthur Caldwell's 20 points weren't enough for South Carolina State to contend with Duke's Blue Devils in their first round game. The difference in size around the basket was a major factor in the outcome.

Getting past first round is major obstacle

The NCAA basketball playoffs continue to be a mixed bag for the vast majority of black college teams that enter post-season play. In Division I, the SWAC and MEAC champions are almost always the lowest seeds which means that get to face to very best teams in the nation in the opening round.

Predominantly white schools in Division I who are more on a par with their black college counterparts in the division, continue to get higher seeds and the chance to advance past the first round and earn more dollars for their respective schools and conferences (if they are affiliated with one).

So what happens is that black colleges at the Division I level take an awful beating and are almost guaranteed to leave the NCAA tournament after the first game. When you have to play the Dukes and North Carolinas of the world, things can get very tough when you're trying to win at that level. What it comes down to is schools with the resources beating up on the schools who aren't as well off financially.

That equation translates itself into zeros mounting in the loss column when it concerns tournament play in the NCAA.

In Division II, there's a bit more of a chance to take the big prize. North Carolina Central proved that this year by winning the national title. Last year, Alabama A & M got as far as the quarterfinals before bowing out to eventual champion Lowell University.

This season, Division II changed the format of their tournament structure. They expanded the number of teams from eight to 16 and took eight regional winners to Springfield, Mass. in what is known as the Elite Eight. The Elite Eight is Division II's answer to the Final Four in Division I.

It appears that the Elite Eight format has given more teams a chance to make it to the nationals because the quarterfinals are played on a neutral court. In the past, teams have had the home-court advantage in the quarterfinals which in many cases helped them get to the national championship round of play.

But of deeper concern, is how the regional pairings are figured out. This season, all of the black college teams in Division II that made the playoffs were slotted in one region. In one way that's good because it guarantees that a black college team will make the Elite Eight. On the other hand, the regional pairings prevented the possibility of more than one black college squad earning an Elite Eight berth. Perhaps there may be more discussion among black college athletic officials and the folks on the selection committee as to how to best handle that in the future.

But for now, let's focus on what took place in both divisions during the post-season rush that's known as "March Madness."

Division I blues

South Carolina State was elated when they won the MEAC championship over Florida A & M because it vaulted them into a spot in the first round of the East Regionals which were played in Greensboro, NC.

The Bulldogs were matched up against the highly visible Duke Blue Devils, a team that was especially strong this season. As we know by now, the Devils reached the Final Four for the fourth time this decade, even though they haven't won an NCAA title as of yet.

Nevertheless, this game turned out to be a blow-out as many believed it would be. Duke walked off with a 90-69 win to move on to the next round.

The Dogs lack of size in the paint really hurt their chances against the guys in blue. Throughout the evening, SC State was never able to mount any consistency inside. So coach Cy Alexander's team had to rely on outside shooting and that part of their game didn't produce what was needed for them to stay in contention.

Swingman Arthur Caldwell played an inspired game in a losing cause, leading his team with 20 points, seven rebounds and four steals. Travis Williams added 13 points and eight rebounds, and Darrell Gilmore chipped in with 12 points.

The Dogs made a serious run at Duke in the second half that gave hope to the fans that made the trip from Orangeburg, SC. Down by 17, Cy's guys ran off 10 unanswered points to cut Duke's lead to 58-50 with just under 14 minutes left in the game. State

Please See Page 12

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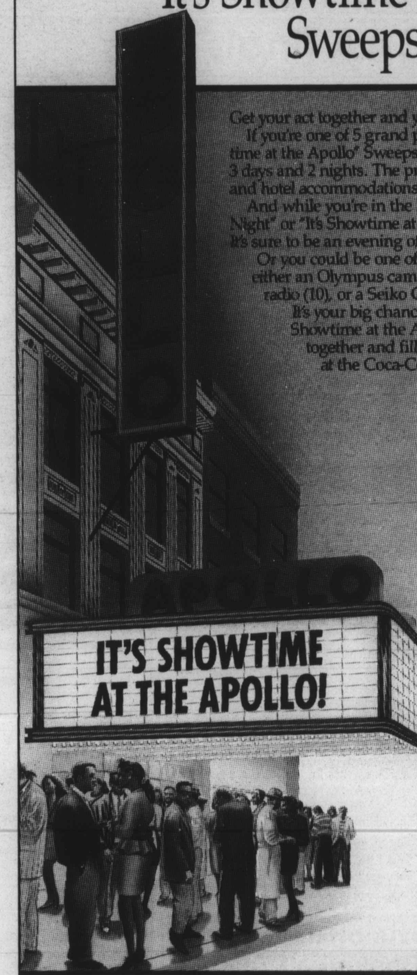

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3. All entries must be hand-printed. Entries that are printed by machine or otherwise mechanically reproduced will not be accepted. Sponsors are not responsible for entries that may be lost, delayed or misdirected.
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