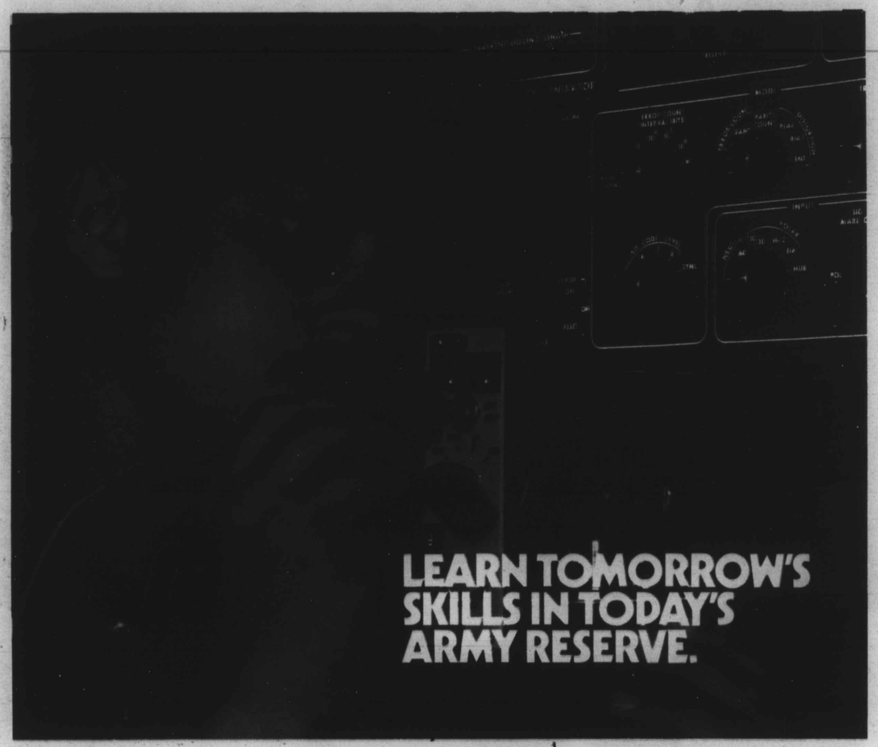

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SIAC MEN'S TOURNAMENT

Alabama A&M defeats pesky Paine for title

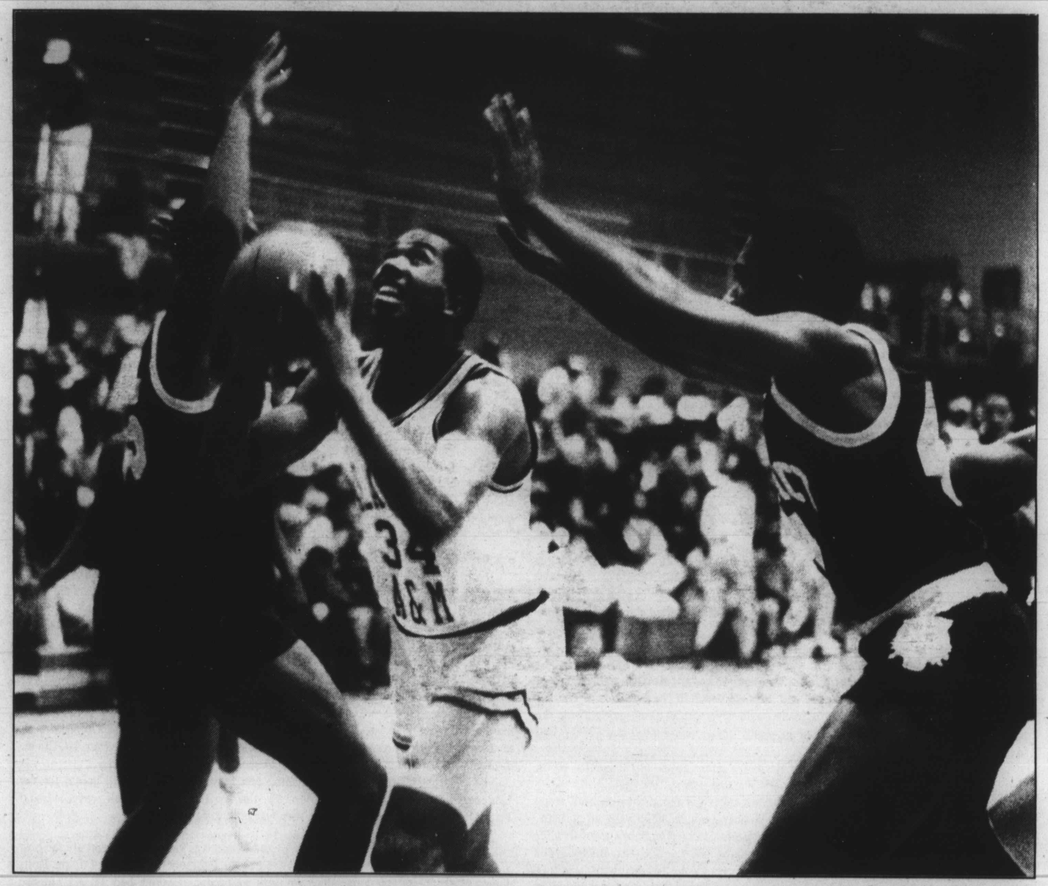

Photo Courtesy of Alabama A&M

Frank Sillmon was the consistent inside force for Alabama A&M as they regrouped in the second half to whip Paine College. Sillmon (23 points, 12 rebounds) was named tournament MVP.

Alabama A & M put on their game faces in the second half to hogtie Paine College 81-71 and win the SIAC basketball tournament on their home floor in Huntsville, Ala.

But in the game's final two minutes, it took three hoops from Bryan Haynes and a couple of free throws by Ronnie Tucker to finally put the Lions to rest.

The Bulldogs and Paine are old enemies. Both teams are as different as apples and oranges. A & M runs the court like a squadron of Olympic sprinters. Paine indulges in a patient offense which tends to control the pace of the game. During the regular season, the teams split a pair of victories. Paine won in Augusta, Ga. (83-70) and A & M earned the "W" in Huntsville (88-84). The Lions won the SIAC's Eastern Region with a 10-0 mark and the Bulldogs tied for first place with Morehouse in the West Region at 11-1.

In a game where two teams are very familiar with one another, there are few secrets. Execution is the determining factor for victory.

Paine's first half went just like Spry desired. The Lions (24-5) practically let the air out of the ball. They were never in a rush to shoot. The plan was to make A & M work on hard on the defensive end for as long as possible on each Paine possession. In turn, the Lions felt that if they could probe the defense enough by continuing to work the ball, they would find open holes in the Dogs defense and get easy shots.

"Going in, we knew we weren't favored to make the finals," said Ronnie Spry, Paine's coach. "Morehouse had beat us once and they also won against A & M. So in the first half, we played very well and that was good for our guys from a psychological standpoint. We were able to control the tempo and the crowd."

Spry couldn't have asked for more as his team took a 41-36 lead at the half. As a team, PC shot 50 percent from the field, 73 percent from the foul line, and 60 percent from three-point land.

A & M coach Vann Pettaway, who led the Dogs to last year's Division II quarterfinals, wasn't alarmed by the five point deficit.

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