CIAA TENNIS CHAMPIONSHIPS

Hampton University Tennis Team 1988 CIAA Champions

Hampton University Photo

16th Consecutive Year

Hampton wins CIAA tennis championship again

It was business as usual for the Hampton University Men's Tennis Team Pirates as they logged their 123rd consecutive CIAA tennis match victory. The Pirates barely worked up a sweat as they cruised to their 16th consecutive CIAA men's championship tennis title. In fact, the school's team has not been beaten in CIAA tennis competition since 1963 when Johnson C. Smith University posted a win over the Pirates.

The Pirates, who didn't drop a match in the tournament held April 22 to 23 at Winston-Salem's Joe White Tennis Center, faced the top-seeded Livingstone Bears for the championship title. Hampton defeated Livingstone in the Saturday finals and were it not for Hampton's impressive tennis history and current record of 25-0, the 9-0 thrashing of the previously 10-0 Livingstone Bears could be considered a major upset.

Livingstone head coach Ron Stinson, who credited Hampton with having a very strong team, said also that a combination of inexperience and the playing surface was significant in his team's loss.

"Their players are very strong. Their one through six players are all very, very strong and all of those players could play number one anywhere else. That's just how strong they are," Stinson said. "My guys were not used to playing on clay and we had never played any of our matches on clay before. Some of their players are from South America and were very used to playing on clay surfaces. We also have a very young team. I don't have any seniors on the team and among the top players I have three freshmen and three sophomores. This is a new experience for them and they just weren't used to the kind of competition where they had to play every day."

The Pirates, highly regarded coming into the CIAA championship, played so well that many observers were confused by their second place seeding in the tournament. None, perhaps, were more confused than Pirates coach Dr. Robert Screen.

"We're the number one ranked Division II team in the nation," he said. "You tell me how we could be seeded second. When I first saw it, I thought it was a mistake. How do you seed the number one team in the nation at the number 2 spot?"

Stinson, whose 25-5 Livingstone Bears turned in a flawless conference performance this season, feels his team's seeding was justified based on their play during the regular season.

"The way it was derived at was by looking at the fact that we had played 10 matches in the conference and we were 10-0," said Stinson. "Hampton was 6-0 because there were some matches that they couldn't get to play."

Livingstone advanced to the finals with wins over Winston-Salem State University and Virginia Union University. Hampton reached the finals by posting victories against Shaw University and St. Augustine's.

Hampton has dominated men's CIAA tennis, due largely to Screen's successful recruitment efforts. Over the years, Screen has managed to attract top players from foreign countries to the Hampton team as well as luring this countries top black tennis talent. In the 1970s, Hampton was boosted by two players, Roger Guedes and Bruce Foxworth, who went on to compete on the professional tennis circuit and to be ranked among the top 10 players in the world.

This year's championship Hampton team also is packed with some of the top talent from several foreign countries. Screen's team consists of three Brazilian players, two Nigerians and one Pakistani.

Two of the players, Muri Ajibade of Nigeria, and Pedro Alipio of Brazil, are undefeated on the season.

Luis Nascimento and Flavio Lima, both of Brazil, as well as Islam Ul-haq of Pakistan are ranked among the top five players in the 21-and-under category in their home countries. Screen said he has been able to maintain his level of successful recruitment with help from his former and current players.

"Basically, you can recruit foreign players through people you know," said Screen, who has been the Hampton coach for 19 years. "A lot of times, the kids will have friends at home that they know about and they'll tell me about them."

Stinson said that more predominantly black colleges and universities are looking outside of the country for players to staff their tennis teams. Livingstone has developed a Jamaican connection and this year only one of the team's players is American. Stinson's top five players are from Montego Bay, Jamaica, and he said that recruiting outside of the country has become more of a necessity than anything else for some schools.

"Livingstone and St. Augustine's have moved to foreign players," said Stinson, who has scheduled several recruiting trips to foreign countries in search of players for next year's team. "It's very difficult to recruit the top black American players. If I see a top black player that I'm interested in, he's looking at a white school which can offer much more. We have to find talent in other places."

Stinson, who said is basically pleased with his team's performance this year, promises that Livingstone will again be a force to be reckoned with during next year's CIAA Championships. He said also that he hopes the CIAA officials will upgrade conditions at the CIAA Spring Championships.

"The CIAA is going to have to put more emphasis on tennis," he said. When it comes to spring sports, it's sort of like the stepchild. There's a lot of attention given to basketball and football but they're going to have to raise the level of the spring sports as well. It'll take us another two years to match what Hampton has but we'll be back and we'll do better next year. We're going to come back next year with more experience and fight even harder."

With another CIAA championship in hand, Screen and his Hampton Pirates have focused their sights on capturing the NCAA Division II Championships in California. Hampton has finished in the top four at the tournament for the last 11 years, but has not brought home the national championship trophy since 1976. The tournament will be held in Rohnert Park, Calif, May 16 to 22.

– ROBIN BARKSDALE

PROFILE

Photo by Craig T. Greenlee

To keep some of the pressure off of his teammates, Mahorn has been more involved offensively this year.

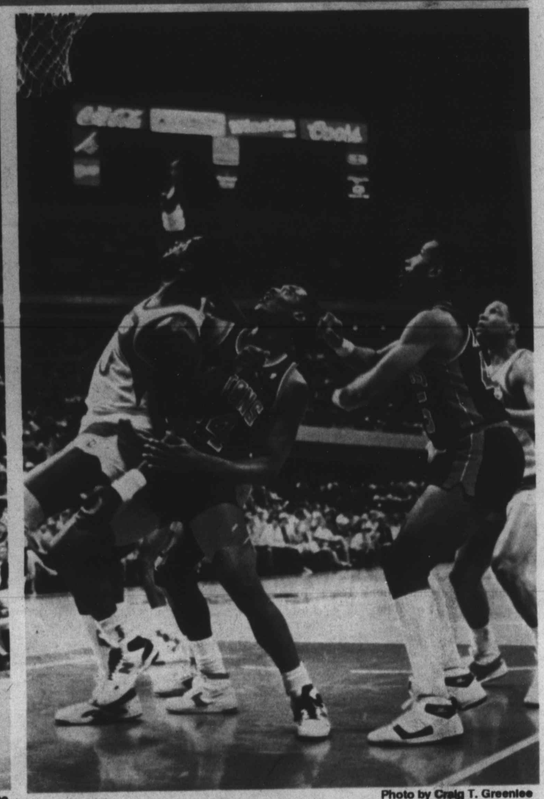

Photo by Craig T. Greenlee

Mahorn has the size and bulk to bump and bruise with the NBA's best in the paint.

Mahorn's power is key for contending Pistons

Rick Mahorn isn't interested in winning the Mr. Congeniality Award of pro basketball.

As the starting power forward for the Detroit Pistons, the former Hampton University star is more concerned with using his physical style of play to help his team get to the NBA finals.

Mahorn (6-10, 250) is well suited for trading elbows and knocking bodies with the league's most formidable power guys in the low post. When he walks on the court, it's serious business. He asks no favors and gives none.

"I get paid to play defense and rebound," Mahorn told *Black College Sports Review* in a pre-game interview before his team faced the Hawks in Atlanta. "Defensively, my job is to play the power people tough and take away what they do best. Anything else (scoring) is a bonus."

This season, Mahorn has received his share of bonuses. While doing his customary work on the glass (nearly 9 boards a game), the burly fellow averaged 11 points per contest. His offensive contributions give the Pistons added scoring balance and help keep opposing defenses from solely concentrating on his able scoring teammates.

"I'm a good post-up player on offense," Mahorn pointed out. "But good teams must have role players who don't necessarily look to score. We have a lot of good shooters on this team. The coaches recognize what I can do. Adrian Dantley is our key in the post, but when needed, I can score to help take some of the pressure off of him."

As a collegian, Mahorn displayed all of his tools as a three-time All-America for the Pirates. During his senior year, he led Division II in rebounding (15.8 a game) and was fifth in scoring (27.6 ppg). He was the first small college player chosen in the 1980 NBA Draft (35th overall), starting his pro career with the Washington Bullets as Wes Unseld's backup and protege.

It's clear that Unseld schooled Mahorn well in the art of trench warfare in the paint. Getting offensive position in the low post against Mahorn is no easy task. Skirting around a Mahorn-set pick can be equally arduous and at times very hazardous to one's well-being.

Mahorn's robust court manners have drawn a lot of attention around the league the last two seasons.

Much of the focus on his style of play started last spring in the NBA playoffs when the Pistons faced the Celtics in the Eastern Conference finals.

That series was no place for the timid. There were few easy lay-ups. The action in the paint more closely resembled what happens between opposing linemen in an NFL game. Tempers flared. Words were exchanged. Players pushed and shoved. Punches whisked though empty air -- most of the time.

The action continued in '87-'88. In a game against the Chicago Bulls, Mahorn committed an aggressive foul against Michael Jordan on a drive to the hoop. Jordan took exception to the treatment and a fight involving both teams ensued. During the melee, Bulls' Head Coach Doug Collins managed to run into a meaty fist.

To further draw attention to the Pistons' penchant for taking no prisoners, CBS aired a feature during one of their Sunday NBA telecasts centering around L.A. Raiders' owner Al Davis. Davis sent all Detroit players a load of

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