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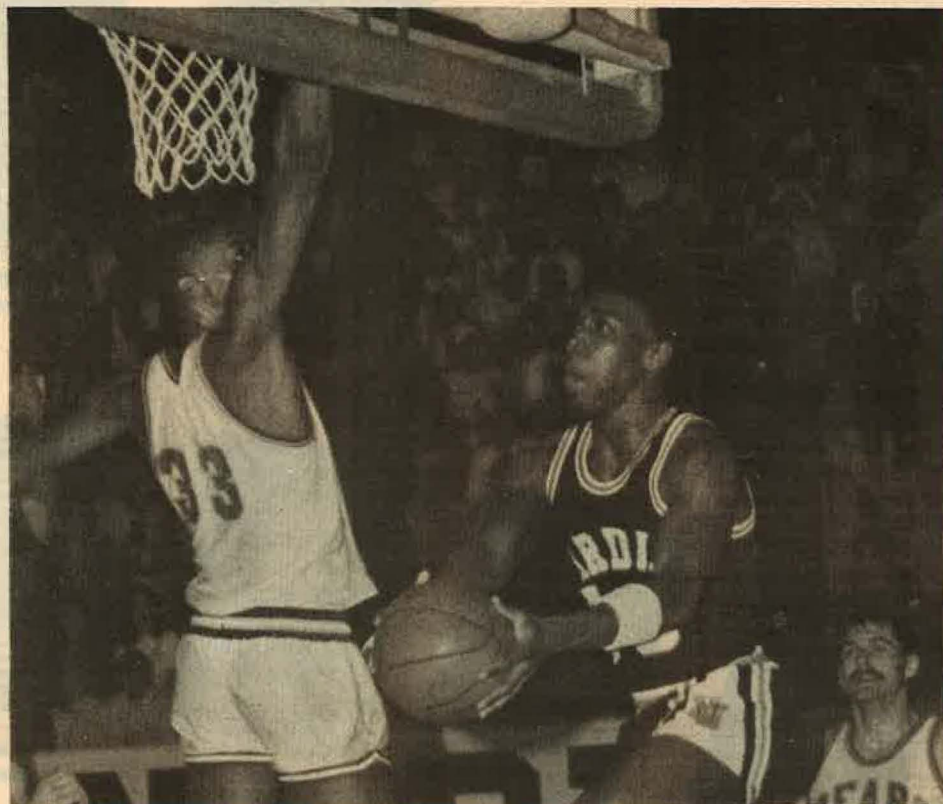


SPECIAL BASKETBALL ISSUE



The Bison

Friday, March 20, 1987
Harding University
Searcy, Ark. 72143
Volume 62, Special Issue



Corey Camper, a freshman who led the Bisons in scoring this season, goes under the basket to score on two-time All-American Scottie Pippen in Harding's 88-87 upset win over the University of Central Arkansas March 2.

(photo by Leslie Downs)

Bisons streak by competition for first-ever District 17 crown

It all started back in November, when the Bison basketball team began its season at Evangel College with the usual high hopes for a successful season. But even the most optimistic of predictions could not have foretold the feats that this season's underclassman-loaded squad would accomplish.

But March 5, with four months of wear on their sneakers and on their bodies, the same Bisons that were picked to finish eighth in the Arkansas Intercollegiate Conference proved the critics wrong with a first-ever District 17 championship.

After finishing in a third-place AIC tie with Southern Arkansas University, Harding entered the District 17 Tournament as the fourth seed. Bringing Henderson State University onto their home court, the Bisons scratched and clawed their way to an 85-76 overtime victory that would set the tone for a thrilling district tournament journey.

The intensity picked up even more three days after the win over Henderson State, as the Bisons played the role of the underdog at the University of Central Arkansas March 2.

Surely, most people believed, this was the opponent that would send the young Bisons home with their tails between their legs.

After all, the Bears of UCA boasted a strong lineup that featured two-time All-American Scottie Pippen against Harding's relatively inexperienced squad, over half of which was made up of freshmen. As proof of their overwhelming talent, the Bears had come to Harding just eight games earlier and given the Bisons a 30-point beating, 84-54.

"I couldn't sleep at all the night before that game, and I wouldn't let David (James, Smallwood's roommate) sleep either," junior guard Tim Smallwood recalled. "I was up and ready to play at 5 a.m. that day."

Smallwood's lack of sleep didn't seem to hurt his shooting touch, however, as he hit seven first-half three-pointers and finished the game with a team-high 27 points to lead Harding to an 88-87 upset victory.

"The UCA game was the best offensive showing we had all year; the first half was the most exciting basketball I've ever seen at the college level," Coach Jess Bucy remarked. "I think a lot of credit for that win should go to the tremendous support we got from the crowd that followed us there. They (the Harding fans) can feel justifiably proud of the contribution they made to our success this year."

Almost as a reward for their support, the
(See DISTRICT, page 4)

'Cinderella' Bisons find first round too tough in Kansas City

The Cinderella season of the Bison basketball team came to a grinding halt March 12 as Harding was toppled 98-86 by fourth-seeded West Virginia State College in the first round of the NAIA National Championship Tournament in Kansas City's Kemper Arena.

With a season tally of 18-13, Jess Bucy's squad established a school record for victories and confirmed its Cinderella status with a first-ever NAIA District 17 title on March 5. Building momentum with a 9-2 record down the stretch, the Bisons laced up their glass sneakers and headed for Kansas City with a full head of steam.

For nearly all of the first half of the first-round action, the young Bisons seemed destined to continue their winning ways. In fact, Harding led by as many as seven points in the first period and trailed the heavily favored Yellow Jackets by only one at 39-38 with 4:42 remaining before halftime.

From that point, however, the Bisons went ice cold from the floor and failed to score a point in the final 4:41 of the first half. Despite a field goal success rate of only 37.5 percent, the Bisons managed to hold West Virginia within arm's length at 48-38 at the intermission.

"We had (Rolando) Garcia and (Tim) Smallwood out of the game with foul trouble when West Virginia made that run in the first half. I wish they'd been in there, but depth had been our strength this year; we should have been able to function without

them," Bucy said.

In the second half, the 28-3 Yellow Jackets flexed their muscles and bullied the much smaller Bisons for as much as an 18-point second-half lead.

The main muscle in the West Virginia machine was provided by Ron Moore, a 7-0, 240-lb. fifth-year senior, who averaged 28 points and three blocked shots per game this season. In spite of Harding's efforts to put a lid on the brawny forward's powerful inside game, Moore exploded for a game-high 31 points, 22 of which came in the second half.

"For a while we did a good job on Moore, but late in the game he bullied his around at will," Bucy explained. "Their inside game was just more than we could handle."

Freshman forward Rolando Garcia, still feeling the effects of his Feb. 19 back injury at Hendrix College, pulled the duty of pacing the Bisons' inside game. Despite being outsized by four inches and 62 pounds in his matchup with Moore, Garcia led Harding with 21 points and pulled down six rebounds.

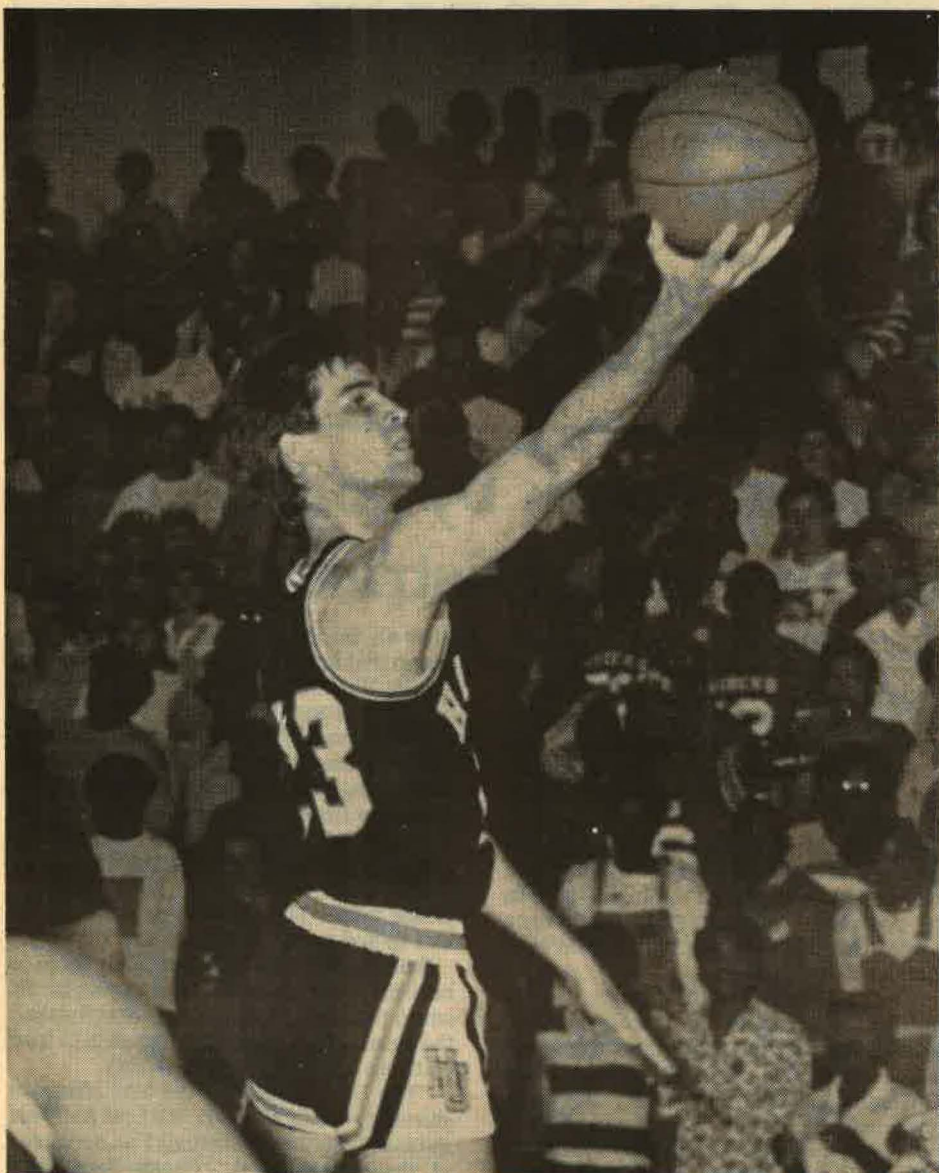
"Before the game, everybody knew they (West Virginia) were big and beefy, but not that big and beefy," Garcia commented. "We weren't intimidated, but we just couldn't lean on them hard enough inside."

Senior Marvin Mathis and freshman Corey Camper followed Garcia in double figures with 16 and 13, respectively, and senior Shan-

(See NATIONAL, page 4)



Junior guard Tim Smallwood shows his jubilation as he rides on the shoulders of Bison supporters after the team took a 63-57 victory over Southern Arkansas University to capture the District 17 championship. (photo by Leslie Downs)



Shannon Hughes, one of the trio of seniors on this year's district-champion team, approaches the basket in the Bisons' 67-53 victory over Southern Arkansas University March 5. Hughes finished the game with 10 points.

(photo by Leslie Downs)

Three seniors close final year with most successful season ever

One of the great drawbacks to collegiate athletics is that, just as the abilities of a given player begin to reach peak form, he is taken from the team by graduation or the completion of his eligibility.

This year's Bison basketball team is no exception. As Harding finished its season with a first-round loss to West Virginia State College in the NAIA National Championship Tournament, three seniors donned their Black-and-Gold jerseys for the last time.

Shannon Hughes, the team's only four-year letterman, closed out his college career in grand fashion, earning all-conference and all-district honors for the second consecutive year. A 6-5, 191-lb. guard, Hughes finished the year with an 11.3 point-per-game average and led the team in assists (89), steals (60) and three-point field goals (58).

"Shannon is probably the main reason we saw so few zone defenses; his reputation for outside shooting kept defenses from packing tight inside," Coach Jess Bucy said.

Because of the youth of a squad that included 11 underclassmen, the Bisons were picked to finish eighth in the competitive Arkansas Intercollegiate Conference. But Hughes says he and his teammates knew they could rise above that prediction.

"We all knew that we wouldn't finish as low as eighth, and that may have inspired us to play better. You never want to finish eighth when you know you can do better," Hughes remarked. "Winning the district championship was a definite peak to our season. I knew what it was like to be in the

championship game, since we were there when I was a freshman. It was a feeling that I wanted to get back before I graduated."

Joining Hughes as a departing senior is Marvin Mathis, a second-year Bison who scored 10.5 points per game to go with his average of 4.5 rebounds. Late in the season, Mathis caught fire and boosted the team in a 9-2 run that took it to the district crown.

"I think my play improved later in the year because of the great players I had around me. It was just a matter of time until we jelled as a team; we got it all together toward the end," Mathis commented.

Bucy feels that Mathis, whose outstanding defensive skills landed him the task of fronting the opposition's toughest big man, helped to improve the inside play of other Bisons.

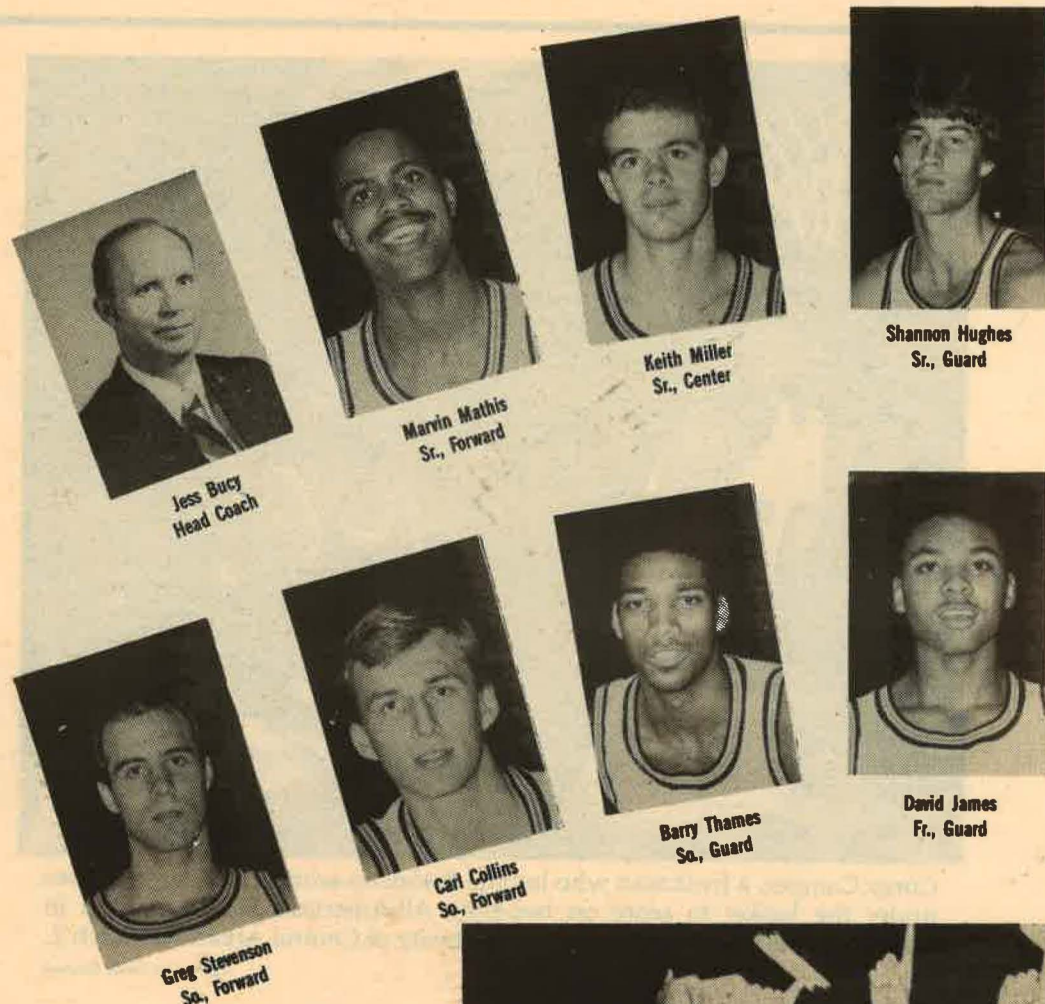
"Marvin is so quick and so good on the boards that we would put him on the other team's big man," Bucy said. "That freed up Rolando (Garcia) and our other players to get more rebounds."

The "unsung hero" of the trio of seniors, according to Bucy, was 6-7 Keith Miller, a first-year bison from York College in Nebraska. Miller made a name for himself with versatility and a way of doing just what it took to bring the Bisons out on top.

"Keith was really one of our most valuable players. Some people like him are quiet players, but his field goal percentage (57%) is a good indicator of how well he

(See SENIORS page 4)

1986-87 Bison B



Jess Bucy
Head Coach

Marvin Mathis
Sr., Forward

Keith Miller
Sr., Center

Shannon Hughes
Sr., Guard

Greg Stevenson
Sr., Forward

Carl Collins
Sr., Forward

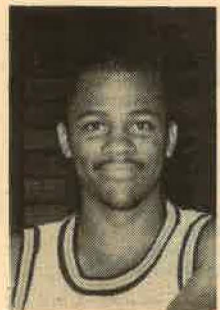
Barry Thames
Sr., Guard

David James
Sr., Guard

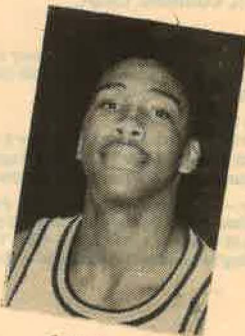


Bison players and Coach Jess Bucy accept plaque from W. T. Watson, chairman of the board, for their win over Southern Arkansas University.

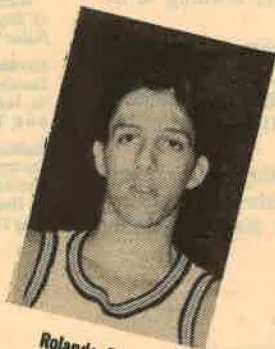
Basketball Team



Tim Smallwood
Jr., Guard



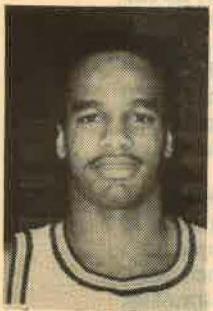
Corey Camper
Fr., Guard



Rolando Garcia
Fr., Forward



Nicky Boyd
Assistant Coach



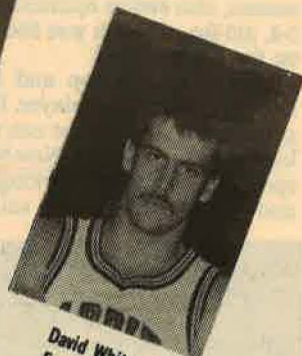
Curtis Washington
Fr., Guard



Reid Hayward
Fr., Guard



Sean French
Fr., Center

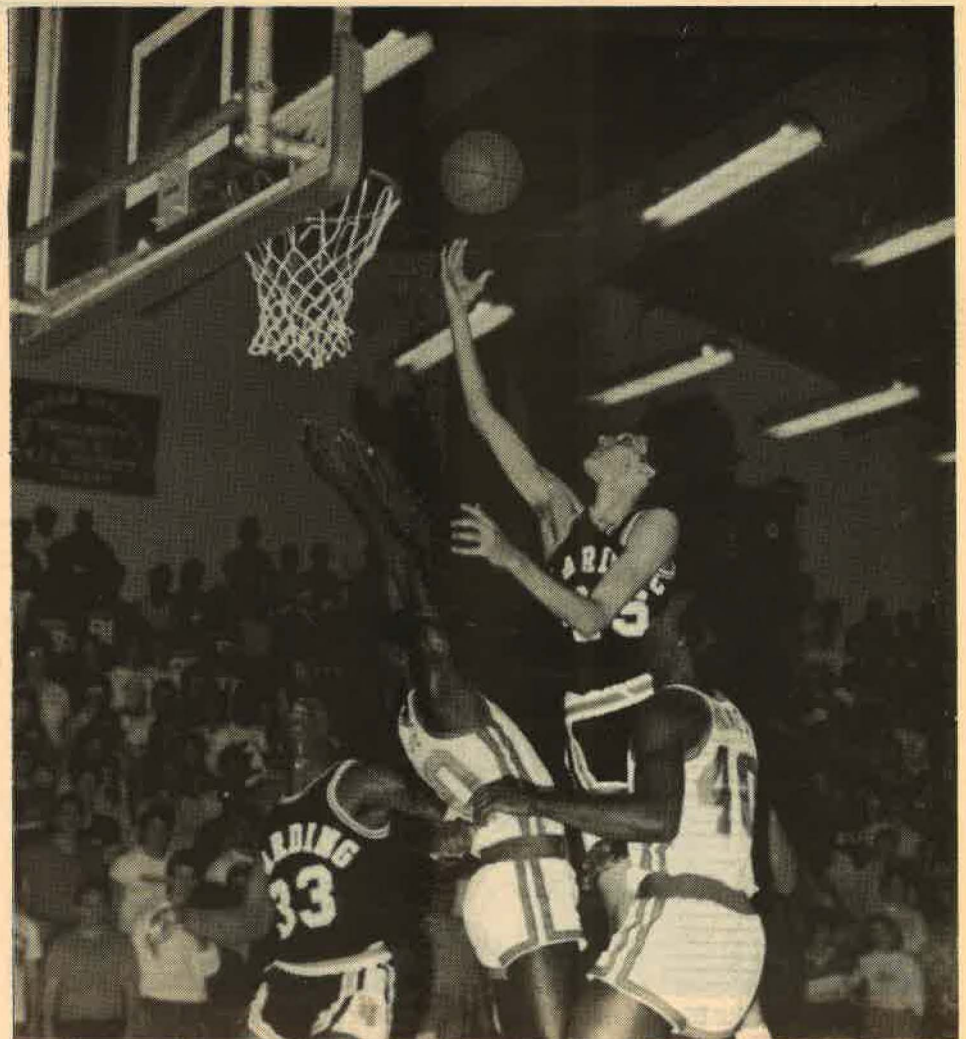


David White
Fr., Forward



cept the District 17 Championship
District 17, following Harding's 67-53
ity March 5.

(photo by Jim Hadley)



Rolando Garcia, one of eight freshmen on this year's team, pours in two of his team-leading 17 points in the Bisons' 67-53 victory over Southern Arkansas University March 5. Garcia also led Harding in rebounding with 16 in the game.

(photo by Leslie Downs)

Freshmen make instant contribution

Coach Jess Bucy is smiling a lot lately, and it's easy to understand why. After all, the Bisons' coach of 18 years has just had his most successful season ever at the collegiate level, with a team that was labeled "too young to win" by most pre-season prognosticators.

But what the soothsayers didn't count on was the unusual quality of the squad's eight freshmen. It was the confidence, poise and competitive spirit of these players that prompted Bucy to praise them as "the best recruiting crop we've ever had."

But Bucy isn't just spouting random commendation; his statement is supported by the statistics. In a league where experience is often the key to success, freshmen led the team in the two most critical offensive areas — scoring and rebounding.

Corey Camper, a 6-4 guard out of Brinkley, proved himself this season with a team-leading 13.7 points per game and an average of 5.6 rebounds that was second on the team. Camper was also second on the Bison squad in assists (80) and steals (43).

Bucy is justifiably generous in his praise of Camper, a player who has shown an ability to perform in all aspects of the game.

"People get carried away with offense, but Corey does everything well. He's very intelligent, seldom makes mistakes and he has great all-around skills; he's just a complete ballplayer," Bucy beamed. "Corey is the kind of player that you build a program around, and the best thing is that he is going to improve and get even better."

Another freshman that has Bucy making big plans for the future is Rolando Garcia, an inside player who overcame illness and injury to lead the Bisons in rebounding with an average of 7.3 boards per game.

After fighting off sickness that kept him out of the starting lineup for much of the early season, Garcia came on in early January to earn All-Tournament honors at the talent-

laden Southeast Missouri State University Classic in Cape Girardeau, Mo.

Another test of Garcia's grit came Feb. 19 at Hendrix College, where a back injury caused him to be carried from the floor on a stretcher. Although he missed the following game, the tough-as-nails newcomer returned in time for the Bisons' District 17 Tournament opener against Henderson State University.

In order to guard against future injuries, Garcia plans to add about 20 pounds to his 6-8, 178-lb. frame.

"Rolando has come so far, it's just unbelievable. And he'll improve, especially if he can put on that weight to help him battle it out inside," Bucy said.

Moving from the spotlight to the sidelight, quiet performers such as 6-3 guard David James emerge. While never quite breaking into the starting lineup, James saw action in all 32 games and possesses the talent and hustle that have Bucy considering a three-guard offense for next season.

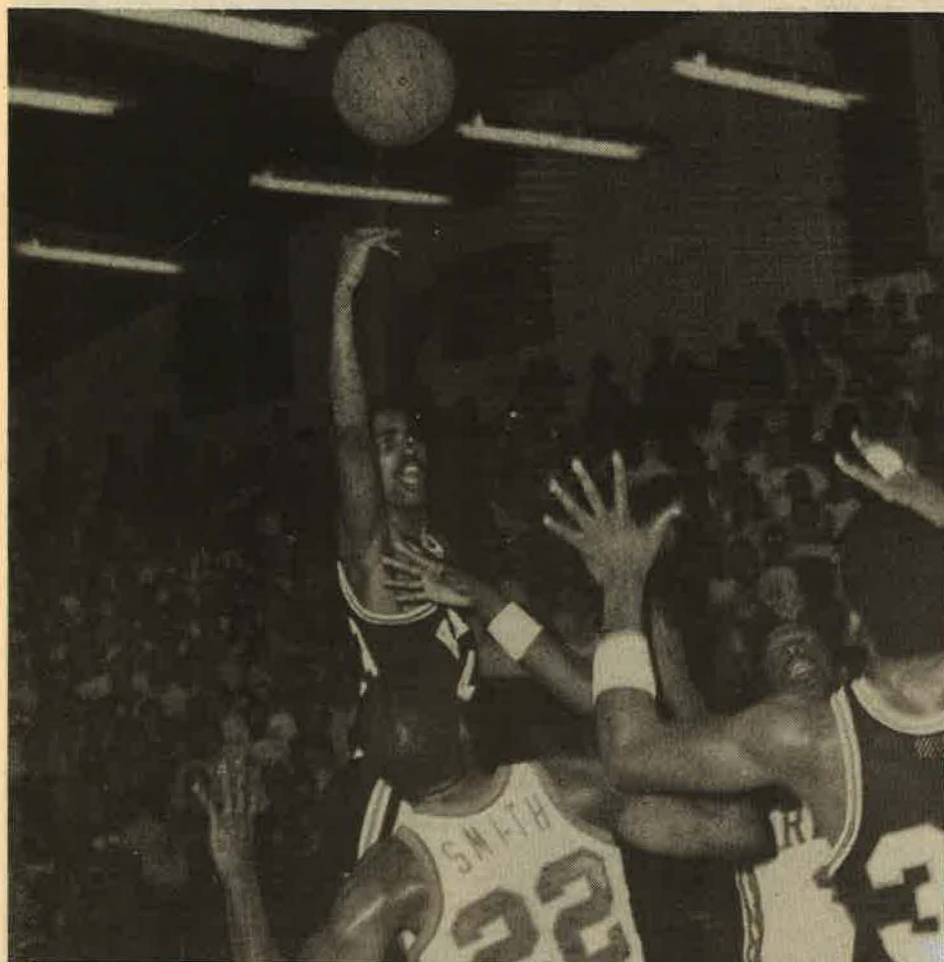
"I have the utmost confidence in David and his abilities; he does so many things well and plays excellent defense," Bucy remarked. "During the stretch, when we played our best, he was in there. One way or another, we've got to get David more playing time."

Indicative of his desire to garner more time on the court, James has already begun an off-season program of his own design.

"I need the most work on my jumpshot, so every day I'm going to shoot 200 of them," James said of his training, which he began Monday. "I was in the gym for three hours Monday night, but I want to improve and play more next year."

Yet another in the seemingly endless list of talented Bison freshmen was Curtis Washington, a 5-11 guard who gained renown

(See FRESHMEN page 4)



Marvin Mathis, the Bisons' most talented defensive player as a senior, displays his offensive prowess in Harding's 67-53 win over Southern Arkansas University March 5.

(photo by Leslie Downs)

District . . .

(continued from page 1)

throng of spectators was treated to a nip-and-tuck second half that saw freshman Corey Camper throw up a game-winning three-pointer with only five ticks left on the clock. Camper finished the game with 19 points, followed by the 17-point performance of Rolando Garcia.

Pippen finished his collegiate career with a career-high 39 points, along with 12 rebounds.

"I sent Pippen a letter after that game, telling him how much I appreciated his talents and how I knew that it hurt to be eliminated from the tournament," Bucy said. "But we felt very good about that win, because both teams played well and we came out on top."

The Harding crowd once again demonstrated its support for the upstart Bison team in the March 5 District Championship game, making the four-hour trek to Magnolia in droves to steal the homecourt advantage from Southern Arkansas.

Excitement built before the game, with Bison supporters pouring into the gym long before gametime to see Harding dismantle the Muleriders by a 67-53 margin. The Bison team entered the gym in streetclothes at 5:45, an appearance that set off a frenzied celebration that would last well into the night.

"When we walked into the gym and all the people started cheering, we were shocked by the noise; chills went up and down my spine," senior guard Shannon Hughes said. "When we got into the locker room, Coach (Nicky) Boyd had to calm us down so we'd

Seniors...

(continued from page 2)

played consistently."

After four years in a Bison uniform, Hughes' most memorable on-court experience was obviously winning the District 17 title and advancing to the nationals, but he claims that there are stronger memories with which he will leave Harding.

have something left for the game."

The confidence of the Bison team was evident as it entered onto the floor for the opening tip-off, and it carried them through 40 minutes of physical basketball to the victory.

"We knew that we had a better team than SAU, so we just had to play as well as we were capable of playing," Bucy stated.

And play well they did. Garcia paced the Bison effort, scoring 17 points and pulling down 16 rebounds. Senior Keith Miller followed with 11 points, while Hughes and Smallwood each added 10 points.

After the celebration that followed the win, Bucy gave his team time to savor its first district title and then went about the business of preparing for the national tournament.

"I wanted the guys to have a chance to enjoy it (the district championship); you have to take time to smell the roses. But you can't be contented with past accomplishments, so we began getting ready for West Virginia State," Bucy said.

Although the team turned in an admirable performance in the first round of the national tournament in Kansas City, the size and strength of West Virginia State College was too much to handle and the Bisons ended their season with a 98-86 loss.

"I believe that they were by far the best team in the tournament, and it was just our misfortune to draw them in the first round," Bucy remarked. "But our team, with all it achieved this season, has nothing to be embarrassed about; I'm very proud of what our team accomplished."

"The thing that I will remember most about the time I spent here is how much fun I had with all of the guys I got to know," Hughes explained. "Every team has closeness, but there was something special about the guys I've known here and the things we've done on and off the court."

National . . .

(continued from page 1)

non Hughes and freshman David James each pitched in 10 points.

As if the Yellow Jackets' overwhelming size advantage weren't damaging enough to the Bisons' hopes of advancing to second-round play, Harding could muster only 40 percent shooting from the field and 65 percent at the line, both well below the Bisons' season averages.

"We weren't as selective as we wanted to be with our shooting; we've played better and we've shot better," Bucy stated, following the game. "But we played hard against a very good team. We have nothing to be ashamed of."

Camper, who led the team in rebounds with eight and hit all three of his attempts from beyond the three-point line, concedes that the Bisons' shot selection deteriorated down the stretch.

"They were a lot bigger than us and their muscle paid off for them late in the game," Camper said. "When we started getting

behind, we'd take the ball down and force up shots too early; we weren't getting the best shot we could."

But, all things considered, the young Bison squad turned heads this season with an upbeat style of play that took it further than any previous Harding team.

"This team improved as much from the beginning of the season to the end as any team we've ever had," Bucy remarked. "We peaked at the right time and played our best when it counted most."

West Virginia State College (86)

Moore 14 3-6 31, Legett 6 2-2 14, Casey 4 3-4 13, Cartey 6 1-3 13, Bryson 5 2-4 12, Layne 4 0-0 8, Booth 2 0-1 4, Woods 1 1-3 3, Noles 0 0-0 0, Oden 0 0-0 0.

Harding University (86)

Garcia 9 3-5 21, Mathis 4 7-9 16, Camper 5 0-1 13, Hughes 3 2-4 10, James 5 0-0 10, Miller 2 2-2 6, Washington 0 1-1 1, Collins 0 0-0 0, Thames 0 0-0 0, French 0 0-0 0, Stevenson 0 0-0 0.

Halftime — West Virginia 48, Harding 38. Fouled out — Bryson, Cartey, Smallwood. Rebounds — West Virginia 46 (Moore 11), Harding 34 (Camper 8). Assists — West Virginia 30 (Legett 9), Harding 24 (James 5). Total fouls — West Virginia 25, Harding 21.

Freshmen . . .

(continued from page 3)

with his blazing speed and outside shooting range. While he needs work on ball-handling skills, Bucy looks for Washington to step forward eventually and become "a point guard that can take control and run the team."

Sean French, who played in 14 games this season, also evokes optimism from Bucy. At 6-8, 210-lbs., French was the largest player on the Bison squad.

"Sean will develop and I believe he'll become a very good player. He already has good shooting skills; he can shoot with any big man in the league. Now he just needs to spend the summer working with weights and agility drills," Bucy said.

For future reference, Bucy knows he can count on his youngsters. "Down the stretch, when the game was on the line, we generally had at least three freshmen on the floor," Bucy commented. "It's seldom that you'll see freshmen as poised and competitive as ours were; that says a lot of good things about our future."

With the unexpected boost provided by the squad's eight freshmen, Harding rode to Kansas City's NAIA National Championship Tournament on the depth of its bench. And, since the roster will likely include almost all of these same players again next fall, it's easy to see why Bucy is a happy man.



David James, a 6-5 guard, concentrates on his defensive play in action from the Bisons' first-round loss to West Virginia State University in the NAIA National Championship Tournament in Kansas City. The hustling freshman has Coach Jess Bucy considering the transition to a three-guard offense for next season.

(photo by Leslie Downs)