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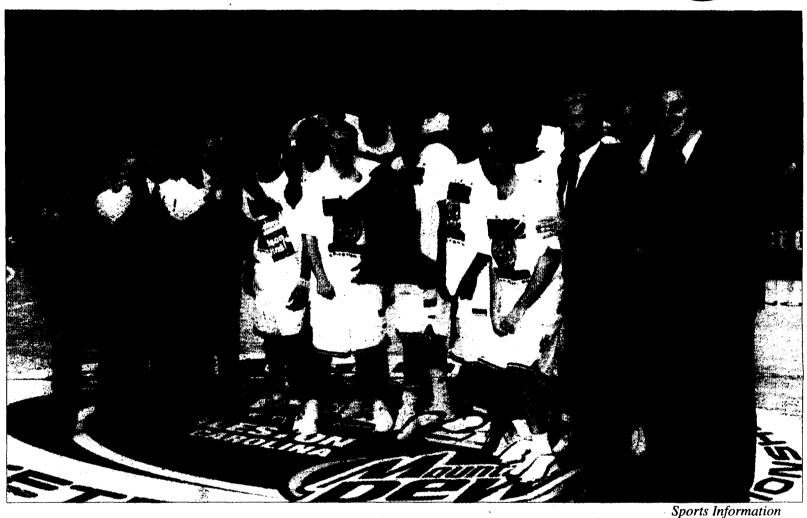
DAVIDSON COLLEGE

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NCAA Tournament Special Edition

Go West, Young 'Cats



Players, coaches and managers pose for the cameras after winning the Southern Conference championship against Furman on March 4. Davidson will play Ohio State in the NCAA tournament.

With two starters sidelined, others stepped up

By MIKE ANDERSON Staff Writer

With a game—in fact, a season—on the line, there are probably no hands to whom the Davidson coaches would rather entrust the basketball than those of senior captains Michael Bree and Emeka Erege.

But as the clocked ticked down in Sunday's championship game, the two captains sat on the sideline—their faces exuding a mixture of desire and leadership.

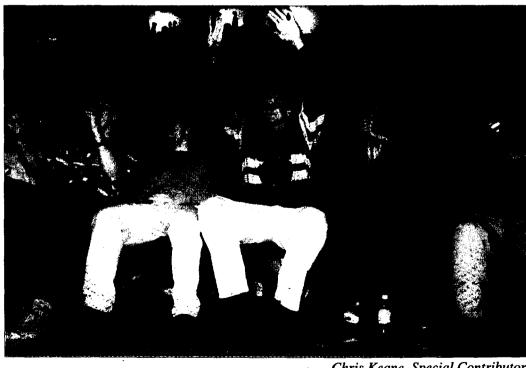
"Mike and Emeka brought tremendous presence to that sideline," said assistant coach Jason Zimmerman. "They didn't have to tell people how badly they wanted to win, you could see it in their eyes. They were on a mission, and that infected our whole team."

Erege returned to battle against The Citadel in Friday's quarterfinal round after being sidelined seven weeks with a leg injury suffered on Jan. 4 against Western Carolina. His entrance to the game was met with a thunderous ovation from the Wildcat faithful at the North Charleston Coliseum.

"Our fans are very knowledgeable about our players," noted Zimmerman. "When guys like Michael and Emeka have missed games to injury, just seeing them get back onto the court is exciting."

Erege proved his mettle, contributing 10 points, four rebounds and two assists in a physical scuffle against the military school.

Though McKillop and staff were blessed to have Erege back in the lineup for limited



Chris Keane, Special Contributor

Players celebrate as Davidson is announced as a No. 13 seed.

action, they still had to contend with another gaping absence on the court.

Senior point guard Michael Bree—the catalyst of the offensive attack-was sidelined with a lower leg injury of his own after colliding with a VMI player on Feb. 23 and straining muscles on his lower right leg and

So the Wildcats were forced to employ a point guard by committee approach.

Senior Fern Tonella stepped into the starting line-up, while Wayne Bernard and walkon Terrell Ivory backed him up.

Saturday's semifinal marked Bree's turn for a triumphant return to the lineup. Met with an ovation of his own, he guided a balance attack to upend recent nemesis UNC Greensboro 68-58.

Still battling through pain, Erege turned in a gritty and valiant performance against the Spartans. The 6-5 product of Long Island Lutheran scored 17 points on 7-of-11 shooting in 24 minutes before exiting the game

see Injuries, page 3

Davidson heads to New Mexico to take on No. 4 Ohio State

By MATT GARFIELD

Managing Editor

Silence fell over the packed crowd in the 900 Room as CBS anchors began announcing the NCAA Tournament pairings on its live Selection Show on Sunday night.

A huge roar erupted when Davidson finally flashed onto the screen 33 minutes into the show as one of the last teams to be announced.

The Wildcats, predicted by most experts as a No. 14 seed, instead are No. 13 in the West Region. They'll travel to Albuquerque, N.M. to take on No. 4 Ohio State at The Pit on Thursday at 3:10 p.m. EST (1:10 p.m. in-

The announcement was high drama for the roughly 300 fans and students who filled the 900 Room to watch the Selection Show on the huge projection screen.

But for players and coaches, it was the first chance to start preparing for travel, lodging, and most importantly, the Big 10 champion Ohio State Buckeyes.

"Knowing that we were going to show up on the board at some point was exciting," said head coach Bob McKillop. "It was great theatre for our fans, students and players."

Although McKillop expressed dissapointmentthat the NCAA Selection Committee did not place the Wildcats closer to home at a site such as Greenville, S.C., or Washington, DC, he said New Mexico has at least one big advantage: familiarity.

Last season, the Wildcats played two games in the COMCAST Lobo Invitational tournament at The Pit, losing to Drexel on Dec. 29 and beating William & Mary the next day.

"We'd love to be able to play in a place that is accessible to our fans," he said. "Albuquerque's not going to be that, but

see NCAAs, page 2

NCAA SPECIAL EDITION

The Teams

An in-depth look at how No. 13 Davidson and No. 4 Ohio State match up. Coaches expect a physical game.

Getting there Page 3

A look back at the Wildcats' run to the Southern Conference championship, including wins over The Citadel, UNC Greensboro and Furman.

Bracket analysis

Page 4

Our own expert, basketball manager Will Roberson, examines the Field of 65. He predicts Kansas over Duke in the championship game.

No. 13 Davidson vs. No. 4 Ohio State Thursday, 3:10 p.m. EST, CBS

POINT GUARDS

Michael Bree (6-0 / 175) vs. Brent Darby (6-1 / 195)

After missing parts of the last four games with injuries, it's critical for Bree to stay healthy. He's been cold from the field lately, but his passing abilities are clearly tops on the team. Darby is as much a scorer and penetrator as he is a passer, averaging 13 points per game, second on his



NCAAs, from page 1

we've been there before," he said. "I really believe familiarity in a situation like this is a factor. I think it can dispel some of the anxiety that accompanies an NCAA Tournament game.

Wildcats will face Ohio St.

on Thursday afternoon

Having played there before, two games and a couple of practices, makes it somewhat of a comfortable environment for us."

As for the opponent, McKillop described Ohio State as "physical, aggressive and very well-coached."

The Buckeyes (23-7), coached for the past five seasons by Jim O'Brien, are the surprise team of the Big 10.

After losing in the first round of last year's tournament as a No. 5 seed to No. 12 Utah State, the Buckeyes were predicted this season to finish near the bottom of the Big 10.

But Ohio State won its first Big 10 championship on Sunday with an 81-64 victory over Iowa, and enters the postseason with a four-game winning streak and a No. 14 ranking by the Associated Press.

After watching film of Ohio State on Sunday night, assistant coach Jim Fox expects Thursday's game to be a war.

"They're very physical," said assistant coach Jim Fox. "They play tough, hard-nosed, beat-you-up defense. It's going to be a very tough, physical game."

So what are the chances for a stunning Davidson upset? Here's a look at a few factors:

Health is always a concern for the Wildcats. Rarely has the team had its full roster available, thanks to numerous injuries and suspensions.

Emeka Erege (leg) and Michael Bree (bruised thigh) missed parts of the Southern Conference tournament, while Peter Anderer earned Most Outstanding Player honors despite bruising his leg in Friday's quarterfinals.

However, Fox said everyone should be available on Thurs-

"For the first time in a long time, we should all be ready to go," he said.

Davidson leads the all-time series with Ohio State 3-2, with regular season victories in 1963, 1964 and 1974. However, the Buckeyes have won the last two meetings, including a 64-57 win in 1976.

Davidson hasn't won an NCAA Tournament game since 1969, while Ohio State reached the Final Four in 1999.

During a season that included stunning road wins over North Carolina and Penn, Erege says this team might be ready for at least one more upset.

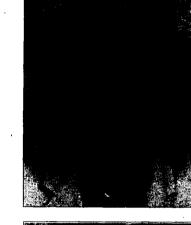
"I think everybody feels this is a game we can win," he said. Added Fox: "I think our guys are pretty confident going in. We're all excited to get out there."



SHOOTING GUARDS

Wayne Bernard (6-3 / 180) vs. **Brian Brown** (6-4 / 200)

This is a critical match-up at both ends. Bernard is the most athletic, electric player on the team, and the Wildcats will need him to score in double digits, as well as defend top scorer Brown, who averages 15 ppg. Bernard and Brown are probably the quickest players on their respective teams.



CENTERS

Martin Ides (7-2/280) vs. Velimir Radinovic (7-0/ 230)

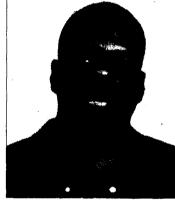
Both teams feature European seven-footers, but while Radinovic is mostly a big-body role player, Ides is a focal point of the Davidson offense. He'll need to establish an early inside presence to open up the perimeter game for the guards.



FORWARDS

Chris Pearson (6-9 / 230) vs. Zach Williams (6-7 / 230)

Pearson has a two-inch height advantage over Williams, and he'll need to use it to earn his eighth double double of the season. Each player leads his team in rebounding, so this should be quite a physical match-up.



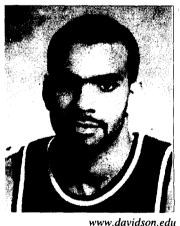
FORWARDS

Emeka Erege (6-5 / 215) vs. **Boban Savovic** (6-5 / 240)

Erege is called "the glue that holds the team together." He is arguably the most talented player on the roster, but he's also the most often injured. Savovic is a dangerous shooter, averaging 12 points per game and 40 percent from three-point range. Erege will need to stay healthy.



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DAVIDSON VILLAGE INN

Y es, we are the preferred place to stay for Davidson Parents

& Alumni, but there's something we must confess

We're cat lovers! Go Cats!



BAD

Good news for Davidson fans:

GOOD

The Wildcats are 3-2 all-time against Ohio State. **Bad news for Davidson fans:**

Ohio State has won the last two meetings, in 1975 and 1976. The teams have never met in the postseason.

Good news:

Coaches expect the full roster to be available, marking only the fourth injury- and suspension-free game this season.

Bad news:

The Buckeyes are also expected to be fully healthy. Good news:

Both Kent State and Indiana State pulled off upsets last year as 13 seeds.

Bad news:

The 13 seed has only a .200 winning percentage all-time (17-68) in the NCAA Tournament.

Ohio State lost as a fifth seed in the first round of last season's tournament to Utah State in overtime, 77-68.

The Buckeyes are 19-2 all-time in first round games of the NCAA Tournament.

Good news:

This is the Wildcats' 7th tournament appearance, and the 13 seed is their highest since the NCAA began seeding the field in 1979.

NCAA BOUND DAVIDSON CATS AKITIOP'S Morch Miracle Make

Sports Information

Several hundred Davidson fans turned out for Sunday's title game to watch the Wildcats earn the SoCon's automatic NCAA bid.

The Semifinals Davidson 68 UNC Greensboro 58

By Matt Garfield

Managing Editor

It's only fitting that Davidson's road to the NCAA tournament included a victory over UNC Greensboro.

These two schools have met six times over the past two seasons, and each game has been a war.

The Wildcats' 68-58 win over the Spartans in Saturday's semifinal round was simply the latest battle.

When the teams met in last year's semifinal, Davidson was playing its third game in three days against a team it had lost to twice already.

The Wildcats held the lead deep into the second half, but fatigue finally set in with about five minutes left, resulting in a 73-68 season-ending defeat. The Spartans went on to win the championship.

This season was the exact opposite. The Wildcats' 11-5 finish in the North Division included two close wins over UNCG.

More importantly, it gave them a firstround bye in the tournament, meaning Davidson was playing its second game in the semifinals, while UNCG was in its third.

As Saturday's battle neared its finish, it was the Spartans (20-10, 13-6) who had to deal with waning energy and heavy legs.

And it was the Wildcats who got clutch performances from two seniors playing what could have been their last collegiate games.

In his second game back after missing 14 with a leg injury, Emeka Erege surprised

nearly everyone with 17 points on 7-of-11 shooting.

With the Spartans focused on shutting down Chris Pearson and Wayne Bernard, Erege took over, scoring on three-pointers, putbacks and explosive drives to the hoop.

"The guy who really killed us was Erege," said UNCG coach Fran McCaffery. "He missed half the season and was their leading scorer. He's obviously a very talented fifthyear senior and he did exactly what you'd expect him to do."

Erege departed at the five-minute mark after suffering a cut just above his right eye that left a trail of blood across midcourt.

It required several stitches after the game, but Erege's efforts in 24 minutes on the court proved to be the difference.

Martin Ides helped the Wildcats hold on to the lead by knocking down 8-of-10 free throws, finishing with 14 points.

Michael Bree, returning from a leg injury suffered in the regular season finale against VMI, had eight points, while Nick Booker chipped in nine. Wayne Bernard added seven points and a team-high three assists.

Peter Anderer couldn't find his shooting touch, managing only four points.

Pearson grabbed 11 rebounds to help the Wildcats take a 42-33 advantage on the boards.

"Today was an indication of the kinds of warriors that play this game for us," said coach Bob McKillop.

Added Bree: "To play UNCG, it's going to be an intense game — whenever, wherever. But we always come to win."

The Championship Davidson 62 Furman 57

By Burgin Hardin

Staff Writer

"Every time we play Davidson, somebody makes a lot of threes," said Furman coach Larry Davis after Sunday night's championship game.

This time, that somebody was Peter Anderer.

Anderer put on a dazzling three-point shooting performance, scoring 22 points on 7-of-10 shooting, including six three-pointers, as Davidson beat Furman 62-57 for the Southern Conference championship.

For his efforts, Anderer was named the tournament's Most Outstanding Player.

"Every time he was called on, he stepped up," said coach Bob McKillop.

The ever-humble Anderer could only think of his teammates:

"It just feels great to know we've done this together, he said. "This group of guys is my family."

The Wildcats' offense sputtered early, committing turnovers and failing to score for the last eight minutes of the first half. Fern Tonella's jumper with four seconds left cut Furman's lead to 28-24 at halftime.

"We were very careless with the ball," said McKillop. "We just didn't have respect for the basketball."

The low score was a telltale sign that the Paladins were in control. One night earlier, the Paladins beat College of Charleston 44-43 in the lowest-scoring Southern Conference tournament game since 1986.

But Anderer quickly brought an end to the drought.

He nailed his second three-pointer six minutes into the second half, and for the next seven minutes went on a 14-point tirade—by himself.

Wayne Bernard, Martin Ides and Chris Pearson followed Anderer with baskets of their own, but the Paladins were not going quietly.

"We weren't going to give up out there," said Kenny Zeigler, who led the Paladins with 14 points. "We'd come too far. We just continued to play hard for 40 minutes."

With under two minutes left, two three-pointers brought Furman to within 58-55.

"We gotta finish this," bellowed Anderer with an emphatic pounding of his fist in his left palm.

After Souchu stopped the heart of every Wildcat fan by intercepting a pass beneath his own basket and dropping in a score that reduced the Davidson lead to two with eight seconds left to play, Anderer did exactly what he said had to be done.

He finished it.

Two free throws by Anderer gave Davidson a 61-57 advantage and put the game out of reach, and Pearson sealed the championship with one final free throw.

"I feel the emotion of all these guys," said McKillop after winning Davidson's first Southern Conference championship in four years. "For me personally, it feels great. But that's magnified by what I know these guys feel."

The Quarterfinals Davidson 71 The Citadel 58

By Burgin Hardin
Staff Writer

On the eve of the Southern Conference tournament, Michael Bree could barely walk and the Wildcats had won only two of their last five regular season games.

But none of that mattered Friday afternoon when the Wildcats took the floor against The Citadel in the quarterfinal round.

As junior guard Wayne Bernard pointed out, "Come tournament time, you look at every game differently."

And you have Emeka Erege, too.

Erege, who had not played since injuring his foot on Jan. 4 at Western Carolina, returned to score 10 points on 4-of-7 shooting as the Wildcats advanced with a 71-58 win over The Citade.

The timing of Erege's comeback was reminiscent of last year's tournament, in which Erege returned for the first time in two months after a leg injury kept him sidelined for nearly the entire conference season.

"He's relentless, passionate and ferocious," said head coach Bob McKillop. "He's a talented young man."

Erege was one of 13 Wildcats who saw playing time Friday as McKillop tried to compensate for the loss of Bree and to take pressure off Davidson's big men, Chris Pearson and Martin Ides.

The Wildcats never trailed, but couldn't quite shake the Bulldogs, either. With under a minute left in the first half, Davidson clung to a slim three-point advantage.

But a timely three-pointer by Erege and two free throws by Bernard just before the half pushed the Wildcats' lead to 32-25 and gave them some breathing room by intermis-

Davidson never looked back, maintaining double-digit lead during the second half.

"It's an ongoing statement about how we've learned from the adversity and challenges we've faced," said McKillop after the game. "All our guys have prepared to step up when they're called upon."

With seniors sidelined, others emerge

Injuries, from page 1

after a sharp (though accidental) elbow to the right eye.

Applegate was able to control the bleeding, wrapping Erege in a full-head bandage—but the pain on the broken fibula had become overbearing, and the trainer ordered Erege sidelined.

And so the Wildcats entered Sunday's game short one senior leader, but hopeful that Bree was ready for a complete game.

Or so it seemed.

Just 11 minutes into the action, Furman guard Guillermo da Luz reached around Bree in an attempt to poke the ball away. Instead, da Luz's knuckle found the groove in Bree's elbow, bruising his ulner nerve (typically

referred to as the funny bone). Bree couldn't feel part his hand for the next several days.

And so he took a seat on the sideline, next to Erege, and watched Furman surge to a 15- • 0 run during the first half.

In the second half, however, other Wildcats stepped up. None more so than junior guard Peter Anderer, who came off the bench in Bree's absence to score 22 points.

"There were a lot of leaders out there during the last three minutes," said Zimmerman. "We knew that Emeka would give us all he could give us, and Bree would give us everything he could give us.

"But if they couldn't go, we knew other guys would step up—and that was exciting. What a statement about this team... Our guys were on a mission to deliver this for their seniors. That was pretty special."

SPURTS

NCAA Tournament Bracket Breakdown Look for Jayhawks to edge out Blue Devils in close final

Will Roberson is in his fourth year as manager of the men's basketball team. An aspiring coach, Roberson has worked basketball camps at Duke, North Carolina, Wake Forest and Michigan. He attended camp at Davidson for eight consecutive years. He offers the following analysis for entertainment purposes only.



Will Roberson '02

After correctly picking the Final Fourlast year, I realize that I simply cannot expect the same level of success.

And I know you all think I'm boring for picking

three No. 1 seeds to advance to the Final Four, but let's face it, they're No. 1 for a reason.

Let the madness begin!

SOUTH:

Overview: Duke probably has the easiest route to the Final Four of any of the top seeds. The Blue Devils' toughest game before Atlanta will be a Sweet 16 duel with the Southern Cal.

This region features perhaps the best group of double-digit seeds (see Bracket Busters below).

Bracket Busters: #12 Utah over #5 Indiana: Give Rick Majerus a week to prepare, and any team in America would be in trouble.

#11 Penn over #6 California: Penn enters the tourney on a roll, and only has to travel across the state instead of across the country like the Golden Bears.

#10 Kent State over #7 Oklahoma State: The Flashes defeated Indiana in the tournament a year ago, and will pull off the upset once again.

DBTH (Don't Believe the Hype): #3 Pittsburgh: The Panthers get lucky by hosting the first two rounds in their backyard, but will stumble once they reach the Sweet 16.

Going to Atlanta: #1 Duke: The Devils are simply too talented for any of the teams in this region. Put them in the West, and they

have the potential to go home early. This team misses Battier and James more than they think.

WEST:

Overview: Davidson gets sent packing to the toughest of the four regions, featuring 12 conference tournament champions, as well as two immensely talented but underachieving squads in Missouri and UCLA.

Bracket Busters: #13 Davidson over #4 Ohio State: Obviously.

#12 Missouri over #5 Miami (Fla.): Missouri was once ranked #2 in the country and have one of the nation's premier players in Kareem Rush.

DBTH: #6 Gonzaga: Sure, the Zags deserved a lot better than a #6 seed. But after a tough second round game with Arizona, don't look for them to be around after the first weekend.

Going to Atlanta: #3 Arizona: The 'Cats began the season unranked, but behind Jason Gardner and Luke Walton, have developed into one of the nation's best teams. The experience of reaching the championship game a year ago is an added plus.

EAST:

Overview: Like the South, the #1 seed has been set up for success. I don't think that the other top seeds will pose much of a problem for top-seeded Maryland.

Bracket Busters: #10 Michigan State over #7 NC State: The Spartans were hounded by injuries early in the year, and play great half-court defense, a necessity for postseason success. UConn has reason to worry over its second round match-up.

#11 Southern Illinois over #6 Texas Tech: see below.

DBTH: #6 Texas Tech: Bobby Knight certainly deserves national coach of the year consideration for the turnaround in Lubbock. But a tough first round draw means another early exit for The General.

Going to Atlanta: #1 Maryland: After stumbling in the ACC Tournament against NC State, the Terrapins will not enter the Big Dance overconfident. Juan Dixon is easily one of my favorite players in the country.

MIDWEST:

Overview: Another unfairly loaded bracket will make a tough road for any team. Whoever wins will surely be battle-tested. #1 Kansas faces a potential road of Stanford, Illinois, and Oregon, just to reach the Final Four. Ouch.

Bracket Busters: #10 Pepperdine vs. #7 Wake Forest: This is the one that all the experts are picking, so it probably won't happen. But the Deacons have to travel across the country to face a team that has already defeated Gonzaga, USC and UCLA this season.

DBTH: #9 Western Kentucky: Sports Illustrated featured the Hilltoppers as a preseason Top 25 team. Now, everyone is predicting the Hilltoppers to upset Stanford, but it's not going to happen.

Going to Atlanta: #1 Kansas: The Jayhawks have the nation's best frontcourt with Drew Gooden and Nick Collison. This

is the season Roy Williams was waiting for when he turned down the UNC job two years ago. Nice decision, by the way.

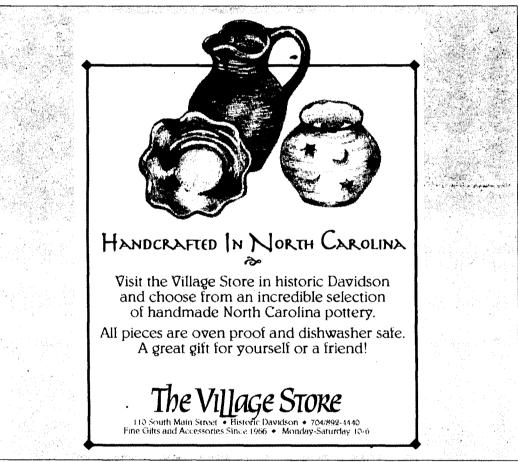
THE FINAL FOUR:

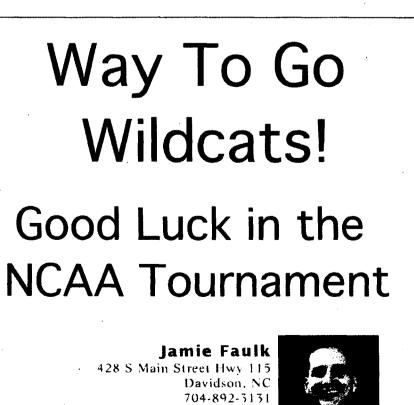
Duke vs. Arizona: In a rematch of last year's championship game, the 'Cats will put a scare in Duke early, but the Blue Devils will advance to the title game for the second straight year.

Maryland vs. Kansas: The best two teams in the nation face off in the semifinals. Maryland will find itself unable to stop Gooden and Collison after Lonny Baxter gets in early foul trouble and a late Terrapin run falls short.

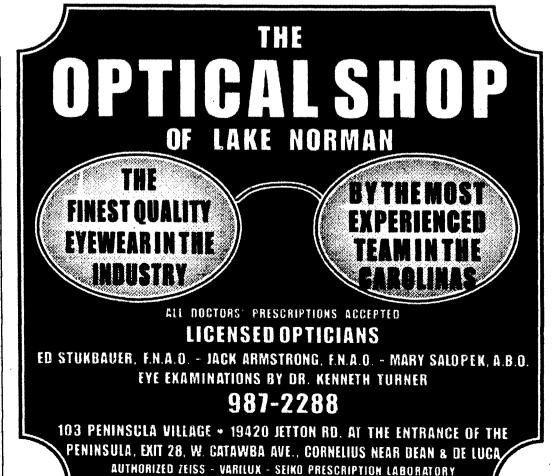
THE CHAMPIONSHIP:

Duke vs. Kansas: The match-up that everyone has been waiting for finally materializes. The Jayhawks win a see-saw affair 84-81 after Jason Williams misses a clutch free throw.









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