

## Hampton hammers Lady Eagles

Written by Keith Henry

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WINSTON-SALEM, NC- There's no denying this. The kryptonite for the Lady Eagles in the MEAC Tournament recently is Hampton. The Lady Pirates have sent Coppin State home four previous times since coming into the conference. This time, the energy of the Lady Pirates proved way too much for Coppin State to overcome in a 64-43 loss in the MEAC Women's Basketball Tournament semifinals. Hampton advanced to the MEAC championship game where they defeated Howard for their 3rd consecutive championship.

Hampton started off strong and dictated the pace early and often. The Lady Pirates' energy was limitless while Coppin seemed to be running on empty all game long. "We played with a lot of energy," said Hampton head coach David Six. "We knew that we had to hit the glass. Coppin is one of the better teams in the league in rebounding. We did a great job with that and defending. I can't say enough about their effort."

Hampton beat Coppin State to everything this time around. Whether it was rebounding (62-28), points in the paint (30-18), second chance points (24-1), or you name it, Hampton dominated.

Coppin State head coach Derek Brown said about Hampton's energy, "The difference is that, no disrespect to the two teams we played prior to this, but I told the young ladies this morning that this team we're playing today will not beat themselves. The mistakes that N.C. A&T and NCCU made, that's not going to happen today."

Hampton (25-4) jumped on Coppin almost from the start. After Larissa Carter's jumper put Coppin ahead 2-0, the Lady Pirates outscored them 14-3. The run was led by Keiara Avant, who was all over the place. Especially when it came to the rebounding. Time and time again, it was Avant or Alyssa Bennett who jumped in from nowhere to collect rebounds. Both led

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everyone with 13 rebounds a piece.

Sherena Abercrombia's lay-up gave Hampton a 14-5 advantage with 11:33 left.

Coppin rushed some of the shots during their offensive possessions all game long. Coach Brown said, "We've done that every game. You know, that goes back to we're not the best team offensively. But a lot of teams that we played, we can make their offensive team make mistakes. With Hampton, if you're going to score, you better score. Because they're not going to give you anything. They're not going to make too many mistakes down the other end."

In that first half, Coppin State (20-12) converted just five of their 26 shot attempts. The Hampton defense hounded CSU and led 31-14 at the half. "When we come out as a team to jump opponents right away, nobody can stop us," said Bennett about the Hampton defense. "When we play defense collectively, nobody can do anything. That's what we tend to do every game. We jump at them."

The less than 20 hour turnaround from their exciting quarterfinal victory over North Carolina A&T may have had an effect on the Coppin women. "Mental fatigue probably more than physical. We had to play very, very hard to win that game yesterday in the second half," said Coach Brown. "These are young ladies and they've been playing all year long. They're in tip-top shape. But mentally, when you have a tough game like that and then you have to come back in less than 24 hours. I basically saw that this morning when we had breakfast. Just looking at the way they walked, the facial gestures that they had, it wasn't anything to lend that we were ready to play a basketball game. Especially against an opponent like Hampton."

Hampton's Jericka Jenkins and Alyssa Bennett led all scorers with 14 points a piece. The Lady Pirates drove to the bucket with ease at times and Coppin hardly had an answer for them defensively.

Coppin State ran into a lot of trouble offensively. They didn't make great decisions during much of their opportunities. Hampton built their lead to as much as 29 (58-29 with 6:43 left). But the Lady Eagles hardly made a dent in the second half as they got as close as 18 on a couple of occasions. But it wasn't to be for the Lady Eagles this time.

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Jeanine Manley, who earned 1st team All-MEAC Tournament honors, led the Lady Eagles with 13 points in the game.