

Mr. Speaker, I rise today to congratulate this year's NCAA Division II Women's Basketball Champions, the Lady Bears of Shaw University!

As fans of the game know all too well, North Carolina schools have a tradition of excellence in collegiate basketball. That success became even more legendary in 2012. We have a new champion in our midst, the Lady Bears.

In some ways it's no surprise that the Lady Bears won the 2012 national title. They made the Final Four in 2011 and began the year in the top ten. But every season is different, and nothing in life or basketball is certain. I don't know what Coach Curtis did, but the season didn't finish as it begun. After compiling a 4-5 record in the first 9 games, the Lady Bears found their groove. From that point on, the team went 25-1 and closed the season on a 15-game winning streak. The Lady Bears went 15-1 in CIAA conference play, were undefeated on their home court, and won the conference tournament.

Then came the quest for the national championship. The Lady Bears beat West Virginia Wesleyan 92-78, Gannon University 64-59, Edinboro University 70-53, Pittsburg State 61-58 and Rollins College 87-71. The final game was as exciting and hard fought as they come. Shaw battled back from a 43-32 halftime deficit to force overtime. When the buzzer sounded, the Lady Bears had won 88-82 over Ashland University. Guards Sequoyah Griffin and Brittney Spencer led the team in scoring with 24 and 16 points, respectively. Center Aslea Williams scored 14 points and pulled down 11 rebounds, and Forward Kyria Buford scored 10 points and grabbed 8 rebounds. Reserve Guard Brittany Ransom also scored 14, providing the team with a valuable lift. The Lady Bears ended the season number one in the polls and with a National Championship in hand!

Coach Curtis deserves special mention for leading this team to victory. He was named the Division II Bulletin National Coach of the Year and the Minority Division II Coach of the Year. But he's done much more than coach. Every single player who has completed four years of eligibility under Coach Curtis has graduated. True collegiate champions pair winning on the court with strong character and academic dedication, and that's exactly what he's done. As an educator, I admire the academic focus that Coach Curtis has made an integral part of the Lady Bears basketball culture.

Mr. Speaker, it was a tremendous season for the Lady Bears of Shaw. On behalf of my colleagues in this body, I congratulate this team for their perseverance, their will to win, and their success in becoming the 2012 champions.

#20 Shemieka Brown PG Sr. 5-8 Salisbury, NC

#21 Kyria Buford F Sr. 6-1 Charlotte, NC

#2 Isayra Diaz G Jr. 5-6 New York, NY

#10 Sequohay Griffin G Jr. 5-9 Coumbus, GA

#30 Crystal Harris C So. 6-1 Jersey City, NJ

#32 Ariel Hatcher G Sr. 5-10 Detroit, MI

#15 Allyssa Lane PG Sr. 4-11 Winter Park, FL

#22 Jashaye Magnum C Fr. 6-1 Miami, FL

#33 Brittany Ransom G Sr. 5-10 Columbus, OH

#11 Brittney Spencer G Sr. 5-7 Norfolk, VA

#3 Enonge Stovall F Jr. 5-11 Philadelphia, PA

#41 Victoria Tanner F Sr. 5-10 Raleigh, NC

#5 Aslea Williams C Jr. 6-1 Akron, OH

Head Coach: Jacques Curtis

Associate Head Coach: Carl Hatchell

Assistant Coach: Ashante Timoll

Assistant Coach: Jonas Richard

Athletic Trainer: Sean Burton