



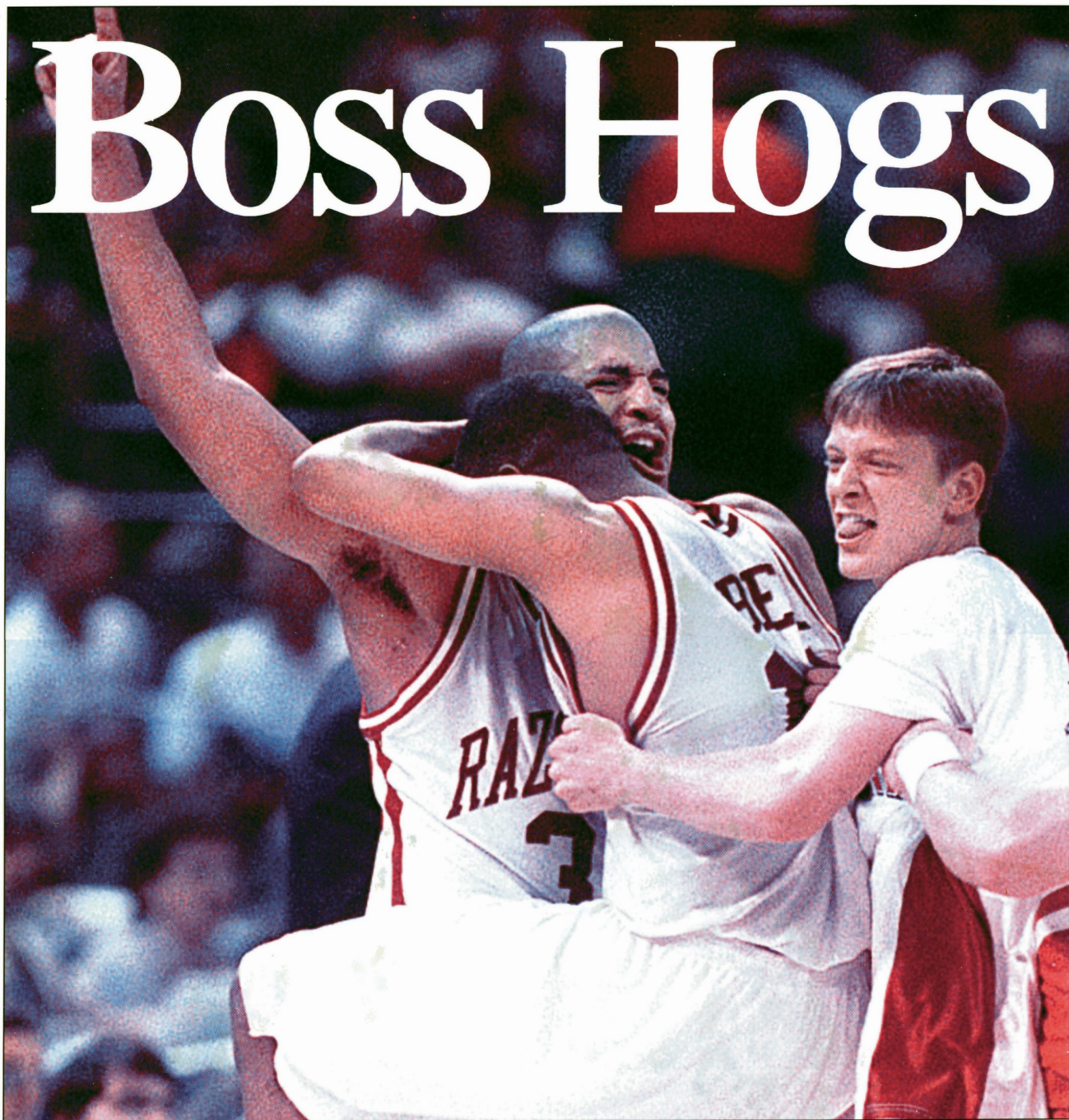
# The Final Four

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SPECIAL SPORTS PULLOUT SECTION

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# Boss Hogs



Arkansas Democrat-Gazette/David Gottschalk

**CHAMPIONS** — Arkansas' Corey Beck (14) jumps into Corliss Williamson's arms at the end of Monday night's game. Arkansas won its first national championship by defeating Duke, 76-72.

## Arkansas' victory made an angel smile

CHARLOTTE, N.C. — Yvonne Richardson looked down and smiled.

Her dream had been to stand next to her daddy on the night he won the big one.

She always believed in him. Last night, with 50 seconds left and the shot clock hitting a dangerous 3, Scotty Thurman launched a high-arching 22-foot shot that seemed to hang momentarily.

The score was tied at 70.

Nothing but net. That shot gave the Arkansas its first national title in basketball. The game, the whole 40 minutes, was for respect, and a gutsy and exhausted group of kids won that.

The season was Nolan Richardson's. Basketball has been around 106 years, and he is the first man to

LIKE IT IS

**Wally Hall**



win the Triple Crown of national championships.

It fits like a pair of his hand-tooled cowboy boots.

The junior-college title, the NIT title and now the NCAA title.

He earned it. Every bit of it. Especially Monday night.

Richardson was nothing short of magical, waving in one play and then another.

He switched defenses quickly and easily and lured a tournament-tough team out of its half-court offense in the second half and ran it ragged.

Make no mistake. This was a very good Duke team, and Mike Krzyzewski tossed everything but his shoe contract at the Razorbacks.

In the first half, he spread his offense all over the court and challenged the Hogs to come to them, knowing every step they taken in the first half would count twice as much in the second half.

With only seven players, he had tried to figure a way to even the fatigue factor.

To a degree, it worked.

With 3:22 to play, the Hogs took a 70-65 lead on Corliss Williamson's three-point play.

After two Duke free throws, the Hogs hit the wall. They missed three chances at keeping their five-point lead. Richardson saw it and waved the fingers that spread his offense. For a moment, it looked as if

he had made a mistake, but he knows his team better than anyone. Even though Grant Hill tied it at 70 on a 22-foot three-pointer, Richardson stuck with the spread.

With 1:15 to play, Richardson called a timeout. When the Razorbacks broke out, the determination burned in their eyes.

Out of the time, they set up and moved the ball quickly around the court. With six seconds left on the shot clock, Thurman took a pass from Dwight Stewart, squared up and fired.

Nothing but net.

Richardson was not satisfied. He knew — and so did the world — that Duke is like Arkansas, and it is not over until the final buzzer.

Richardson had matched Krzyzewski strategy for strategy, play for play.

With 17 seconds left and the Hogs leading 74-70, the second-most important play of the game came.

Chris Collins missed a driving layup, and a leg-dead Corey Beck came down with the ball.

Beck had just spent 35 minutes scratching and clawing, and he would give up his blood if that were what it took.

Seconds later, Beck was taken out of the game because he was bleeding.

Duke got within one three-point shot with 10 seconds to play, and in came Beck.

"Coach Richardson says Beck is the heart and soul of his team," Krzyzewski said. "Tonight he showed it."

Yet it was a 40-minute effort from every single player. Yvonne Richardson looked down and smiled.

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