

Basketball Times

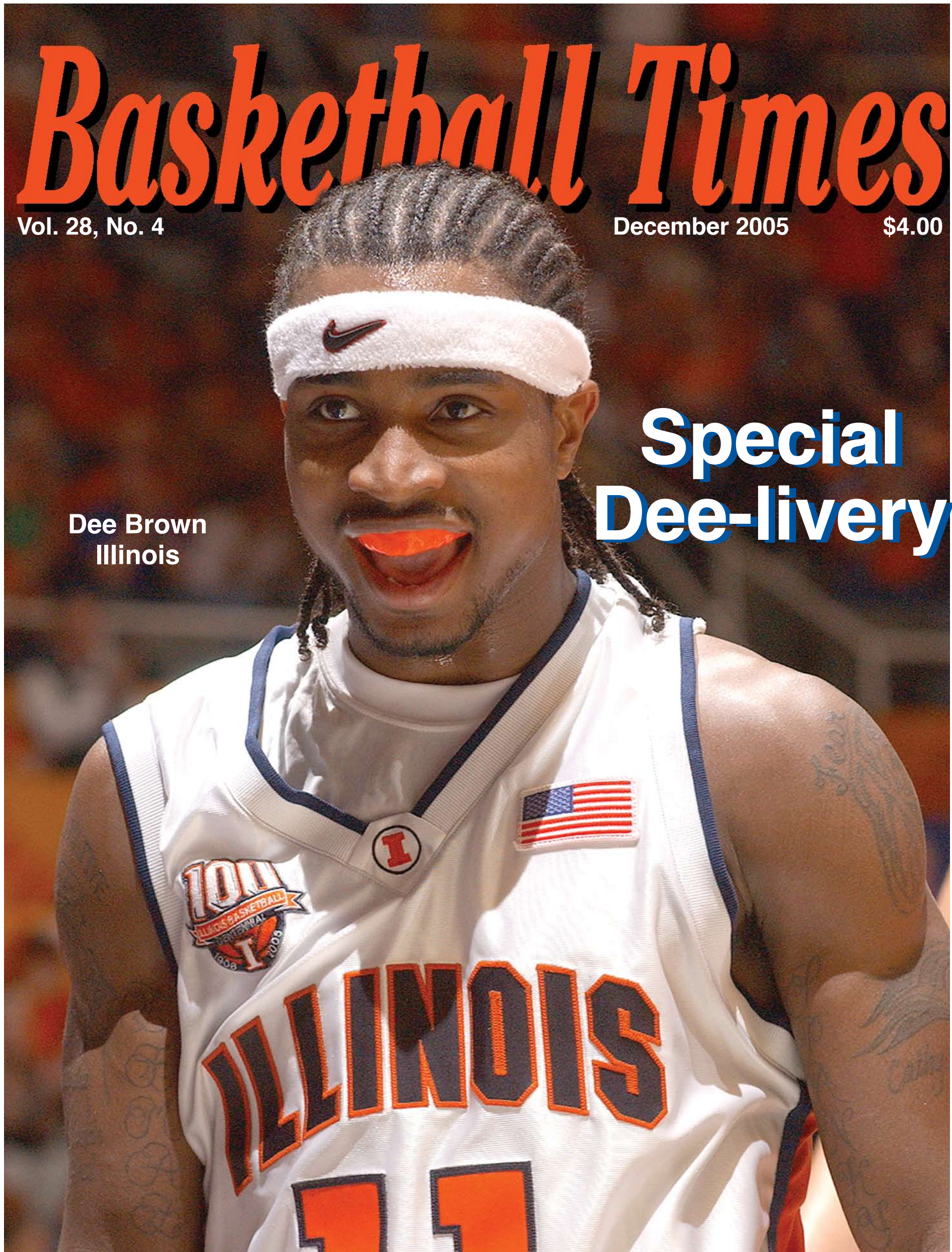
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Dee Brown
Illinois

Special
Dee-livery



Sonny Life's mysteries: Early commitments, says... West Coast and Triangle offenses



Sonny Vaccaro

Here we are, in mid-November, and what do I see when I wake up this morning? We had basketball games all over the country last night. We had the BCA, the NIT, the Guardians Classic. We had 18 other classics going on.

And, oh yeah, when I was perusing my television, I noticed a football game that started rather late. It was between somebody and somebody else, and it was still 12:30 in a.m. – a.m., ladies and gentlemen, on the Eastern seaboard – as I watched the two teams from Ohio play a football game.

Yup, those student-athletes must be doing wonderfully in their classrooms this morning.

But I don't want to stick on that, because I've harped on that before. And I'm happy that we have all these tournaments that teams can compete in. The NIT is an interesting thing, because they're really going to do great things with that when we send teams all over the world to get beat on the home courts of someone obviously superior.

But that's OK, too, because the guys who are inferior will learn a lot by getting beat by the teams that are superior to them.

Do you know the other thing that was interesting? I'm going to backtrack a bit, back to last Sunday afternoon. On Sunday afternoons, every once in awhile, I do watch pro football. I enjoy watching the college game, also.

Sometimes, there's a professionalism in the college broadcasts, when I hear what great announcers we have. And there are some great, Hall of Fame announcers. Their voices are wonderful. And the pictures that the television crews show now are beautiful, as we see mountains and streams and coeds running all over the field and goalposts coming down.

That's all beautiful. But the terminology is what I like. You know, terminology like the West Coast offense. Ladies and gentlemen, this West Coast offense is the greatest thing to happen since Amos Alonzo Stagg invented this game. (Did he invent this game? I'm not sure of that. I know Naismith invented basketball. I really don't know who invented football.)

This West Coast offense is great. You listen to these intelligent announcers on television, and they'll tell you all about it. It all started, I guess, with a guy named Bill Walsh. He was pretty damn successful, and I have to give Mr. Walsh a lot of credit, because he did a lot of great things. He coached the San Francisco 49ers and won a lot of world championships.

The only other thing I remember about those world championships is that they had a guy named Joe Montana and another guy named Jerry Rice and about 15 other guys that I could name here who were pretty damn good. And that West Coast offense could have been the North Pole offense or the South Pole offense, because they knew how to score touchdowns. Yeah, that's the key to this game, scoring touchdowns.

But I'd watch these games, and I swear to God, every team in America runs this West Coast offense. And I know for a fact, despite my inferior knowledge of football, that not everyone can win all the games that Montana and Rice won.

Somehow, this West Coast offense just isn't working

at the University of Washington for Tyrone Willingham. I know that he understands all its nuances. But they just aren't getting that pass. You know that pass where the guy rolls out and another comes back? Or something like that. It doesn't work for Washington.

I do love watching the kids play basketball, even in the pros. I keep up more with individuals and friends than teams. I look at box scores more than team scores. Why do I do that? Because I have a rooting interest in a lot of the kids playing basketball today, at some level.

I want them all to succeed. When they don't succeed, I feel very bad for them and hope they will get on with their lives and go on to do other things.

The thing about basketball that's intriguing is the Triangle offense.

You see, it's not like the West Coast offense. It's different, because, as we know, football has a much bigger playing field than basketball. In basketball, we have about 95 feet to run around in and only five people to work with. And we have this thing called the Triangle offense.

The Los Angeles Lakers have been practicing for six weeks now, and as I look around, I don't see many young players on this team. I know that Kobe left after high school, but, hell, he left there nine years ago. He should understand something about it.

I forgot! Of course, he knows something about it. He won three world championships. He had a guy in the middle – named Shaquille O'Neal – of that Triangle offense.

The *Los Angeles Times* informed me this morning that the Lakers are still working out this Triangle offense. The Lakers still don't get the intricacies of this Triangle offense.

You see, it's really hard, that triangle. Is it a Christmas tree? What is it, exactly, about that triangle that makes it so darned difficult? But I swear, they have to go back every day and work on that Triangle offense.

I think I know the answer. I'm going to get a tripod. Can we get a tripod for the Triangle offense? We'll get a tripod and name it Shaquille O'Neal, and then I'll bet you that Triangle offense works then.

Yeah, I'll bet it would.

Saying all these things, isn't it wonderful that we're back and playing again? Isn't it wonderful that the college season is here and that we're into the NBA season already?

I want to tell you something: Never in my born years – and it's been years since I was born, ladies and gentlemen – have I seen so many early commitments. It seems that everyone and his brother has committed early.

That doesn't mean that they've committed themselves to an insane asylum. That means that they've committed themselves to a university or college of their choice.

Now, I understand that this is good for the guys who are going to be playing college ball next year. But,

nope. I'm talking about commitments from sophomores and juniors who are going to play in our great universities and our great coaches across America. Yeah, those are the guys that I really like.

I think I counted, after checking on all my friends who run these scouting services, about 25 or 30 early commitments from players who are going to be sophomores or juniors *next year!* And the year after that.

I don't know how all of our brilliant coaches who are evaluating talent had the time to go scout them for 24 hours a day, seven days a week, since there are so many limits on the number of days they can evaluate. I think what they really did is go to all the superstar camps this summer and all the workouts that these kids attend and all the tournaments in Las Vegas and other places that the kids go to in other cities, and they watched these for sparing moments in the summertime.

And then they went back and took all the recommendations from my friends with the scouting services – *USA Today*, Bob Gibbons, Clark Francis – all the guys who do this for a living and give you names and really work at it.

And then my brilliant college coaches, who are making millions of dollars a year, and their assistants, who are running all around, say, "This is the guy we want."

And then the kids say, "Wow, they want me. I'm going."

Two years ahead of time.

You wonder why some of these people make mistakes? You wonder why there's confusion in the college game? I know that part of the confusion is in even allowing early commitments.

It's stupid! Because if the kid backs down, then the kid's wrong. Then if the kid goes somewhere else, then there's something wrong with the other guy who recruits him. We just saw a situation at two major universities, where a kid who said he was coming wound up going somewhere else. We don't need to go into it.

But my point is, why in the world do these people make early commitments? Why would they even want to make early commitments? Why would college people take the time to say they're coming here? How do they even know they can play?

After all, all they saw of them was during the summertime.

And we all know that summer basketball is no place to evaluate talent.



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From the editor...

Call it quaint, but *Basketball Times* still believes there are plenty of fans who prefer to read their basketball news and opinions from somewhere other than behind a computer. Not all of them, mind you. But enough of them. It's a romantic notion, perhaps, but there's still something special about the feel of newsprint or the collection of past magazines piled up in the office.

That said, you should see our new web site.

It's still at www.basketballtimes.com, but the look is fresh and bright and pleasant to the eye. Most of the old features are here. Did you know that you can go here to find the most comprehensive list of Division I transfers that you'll find anywhere?

You'll find news there, too, updated daily – or not – in that blog style that's all the rage in today's cyberspace. We'll stick primarily to stories by columnists who appear regularly in *BT* or whose past or future connections make them friends of *BT*. The idea, essentially, is to give potential readers a taste of what to expect if they subscribe to *BT*.

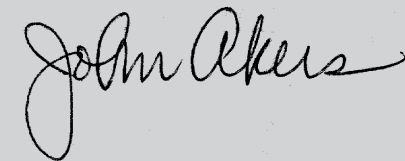
And we're leaning on old www to help us in the self-promotional area where, frankly, we could do better. You'll see a photo of Bob Knight reading *Basketball Times*. We've never had a problem claiming that *BT* is the greatest assemblage of writing talent by any single-sport publication, because it's the truth and because the late, great Larry Donald did most of that legwork. But it's nice to have testimonials from folks like ESPN's Dick Vitale, Oklahoma coach Kelvin Sampson and Orlando Magic executive Pat Williams that essentially say the same thing.

We feel comfortable bragging on the web site, too, because Joe Dwyer and Angela Lento of the All Coach Network were its creators. They design web pages for many of the nation's college coaches, including Sampson, Arizona Hall of Famer Lute Olson, Villanova's Jay Wright and Bruce Pearl of Tennessee. We'd be surprised if, someday, all of the nation's top coaches do not have web pages that are designed by ACN. They've done a lot of great things beyond their web sites, such as helping to organize coaches to raise money for Hurricane Katrina relief and donor awareness programs.

The new site isn't out to replace the magazine, but to complement it by giving others a hint of what's inside and letting them know how others feel about it. Maybe you won't need to look at it at all. Hopefully, we're preaching here to the choir.

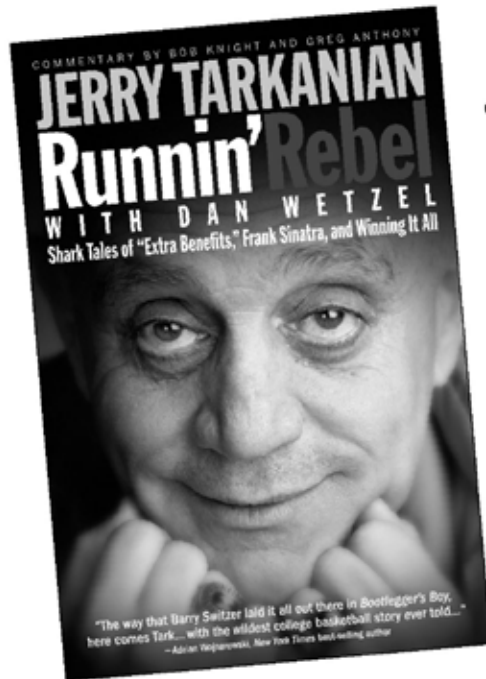
We'd like to offer a hearty welcome to the former readers of *Eastern Basketball*, whose time came to an end with the November 2005 issue. *EB* has a proud past, and we realize that the transition to *BT* is bittersweet.

You tuned in for another game and were set to watch that one. We're switching you to another one, but for good reason. *BT* has a lot to offer, with news and opinions that often extends beyond the usual borders. And there's still plenty of that East Coast mindset from writers such as Dick Weiss, Bob Ryan, Dick Jerardi, Adrian Wojnarowski, Kevin McNamara, Al Featherston, Gary McCann and Rick Bozich.



Celebrating College Basketball's Most Memorable Teams and Personalities!

Great NEW Reading for College Hoops Fans!

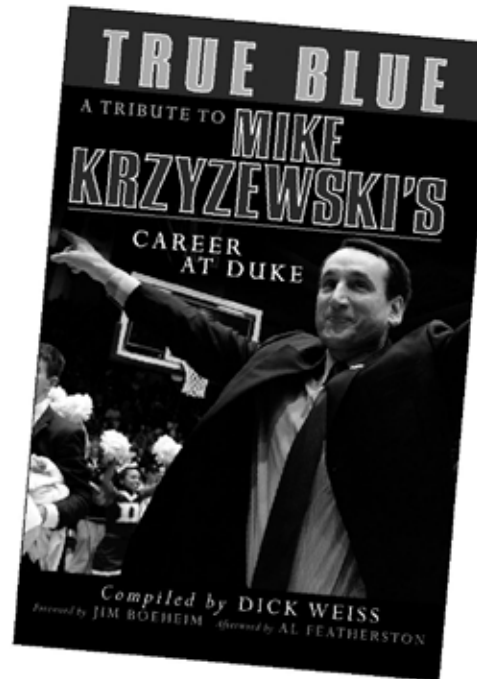


JERRY TARKANIAN, RUNNIN' REBEL:
Shark Tales of "Extra Benefits," Frank Sinatra, and Winning It All

by Jerry Tarkanian
with Dan Wetzel

Commentary by
Bob Knight and
Greg Anthony

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TRUE BLUE:
A Tribute to Mike
Krzyzewski's
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Compiled by
Dick Weiss

Foreword by
Jim Boeheim

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Pair of coaching legends meet in Madison Square Garden

Dick Vitale

Hey, a couple of recent conversations offered reminders to me about the great passion that defines some of the elite coaches in college basketball. Both the General, **Robert Montgomery Knight**, and **Jim Boeheim** have maintained that great passion despite unbelievable decades-long runs at the top of their profession.

Let me tell you what makes them so special: their incredible desire to be the best they can be. Here are a pair of guys who, between them, have almost 1600 wins. Yet, when I was done conversing with them you would have thought that each was trying to prove to someone that they can coach. They have a passion and love for what they are doing, and they really care about today.

Yes, it's not about yesterday and their lengthy list of accomplishments. It's not about tomorrow, either. The item that concerns them today and being the best they can be.

At one point, I said to the General, "It sounds like you haven't won a game. All you are doing is heading towards becoming the ultimate winner of all-time in college basketball. Yet, you still have the anxiety of a first or second year coach."

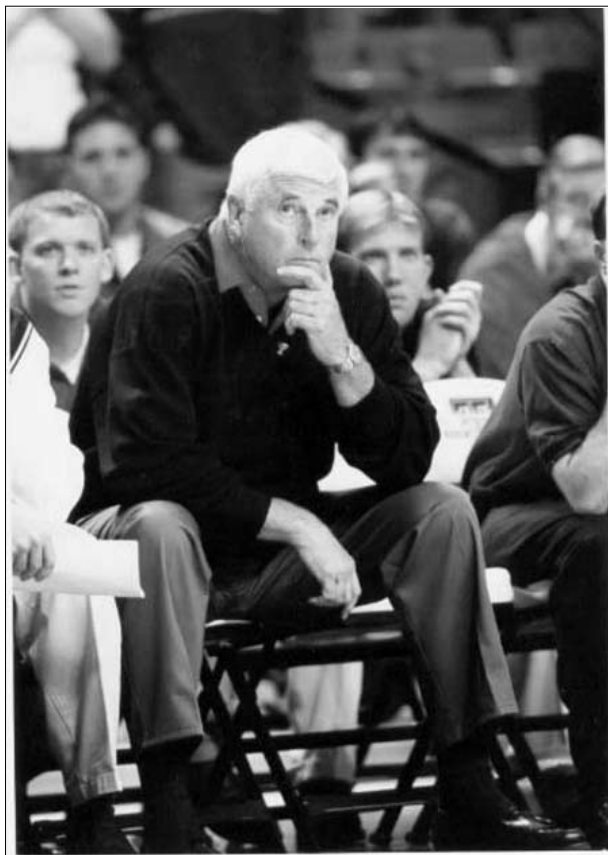
His response was direct and emphatic. He told me that when he loses that feeling and that buzz, that will be the signal that it is time to move on.

It's not over yet, baby. When you look at Texas Tech, it has a dynamite guard in **Jarrius Jackson**. He is going to make a strong case for All-America honors. This kid can penetrate, handle the ball, score and defend. This is one of the premier point guards in the country.

Texas Tech also has a talent in **Martin Zeno**. This could be a year when Zeno breaks out. In tandem with Jackson, the Red Raiders will have a terrific 1-2 combination.

When you speak with Jim Boeheim, you walk away with the same feeling you get after chatting with Bob Knight. Boeheim has more than 700 W's to his credit, but his passion for winning remains high. He mentioned that he was disappointed with the Orange's performance against Cornell, but that the one thing people tend to overlook is how disciplined this Ivy League team was. **Steve Donahue's** team has a great understanding of the game and can make the three. If you can shoot the three, you can create problems for anyone.

Syracuse had to go down to the wire to win at the Carrier Dome, and it was its freshman diaper dandy, **Eric**



Coaching legends Bob Knight (left) and Jim Boeheim met in Madison Square Garden in mid-November.

Devendorf, making three big plays to help secure the W and send the Orange to Madison Square Garden. That is where two Hall of Famers, Knight and Boeheim, met head-to-head in a semifinal meeting of the Coaches vs. Cancer Classic, won 81-46 by Syracuse, that was the first game of what is my 27th season on ESPN.

My, where has all the time gone? I can't believe it. Syracuse was 1-of-19 shooting threes against Cornell. A team with **Gerry McNamara** on its roster was 1-of-19? Are you kidding me?

The bottom line, though, is that in preseason tournaments like this one, the experimental rule extending the 3-point distance to 20 feet, nine inches was in place. One foot may not sound like much, but it's one more element that can prohibit teams from getting into a flow early in the season. It's tough to get into rhythm when you are checking to see if your feet are behind the line.

When you mention tough-luck teams, how about Villanova? In my preseason projections the Wildcats were among my top three teams in America. With **Curtis Sumpter** on the court you can take it to the bank that **Jay Wright's** club would have been knocking on the door. Sumpter, though, went down in October and recently underwent surgery in Birmingham, Ala., to repair the ACL he tore for a second time in his left knee. (The first time came against Florida in the second round of the NCAA Tournament last March.)

Make no mistake, the Wildcats will still be an outstanding basketball team. The backcourt is superb, led by seniors **Randy Foye**, **Allan Ray** and junior **Mike Nardi**. They are joined by sophomore **Kyle Lowry**, one of the top diaper dandies in the Big East last season. And

Jason Fraser is back in the lineup too after he underwent double knee surgery last spring.

The loss of Sumpter, however, is a major loss when your goal is to win a national championship. You are not just talking about an average player. This 6-foot-7 forward from out of Brooklyn, N.Y. is a multi-dimensional forward who creates all kind of matchup problems for opposing coaches. Just give a call to **Bill Self** at Kansas and ask him about Sumpter – all Sumpter did was score 26 points last year in helping Villanova knock the Jayhawks from the ranks of the unbeaten.

In the end, though, look for Villanova to still be one of the Big East's class teams.

At Indiana, it's been well documented that **Mike Davis** needs a big season to retain his job. The school's athletic director has said as much in public statements, and it is apparent that a lot of focus will be placed on the won-loss record in Hoosierland.

So what happens?

D.J. White, one of the top freshmen in the Big Ten last season, was slated to miss 4-6 weeks after suffering a broken foot. He will return, possibly in late December,

and there will still be time for him to hook up with **Marco Killingsworth** inside. Davis is convinced that both are legitimate candidates for player of the year in the Big Ten. That, my friends, is saying a lot. When you have athletes of that quality, you have a chance to win.

One of the squads that has a chance to take another step forward is UCLA. The young backcourt of **Jordan Farmar** and **Arron Affalo** is ready to make string music in their second year together in Westwood. These kids can make shots and understand how to play. There's no doubt that Farmar has stardom written all over him.

Another rising sophomore who looks like he is headed toward special things is **Corey Brewer**. Down at Florida, the Gators will be without three standouts from the club that captured the SEC Tournament in **Matt Walsh**, **Anthony Roberson** and **David Lee**. All three have made an NBA roster, so that gives you an indication of the talent level that must be replenished.

In the 6-7 Brewer, the Gators have something special. This sophomore is on his way to becoming a tremendous player. He is a great leaper who is excellent in transition. In addition, he can take the ball to the basket and can be a force on the defensive side of the court. That is an area that Florida has to get better at.

The one thing about this Florida team is that it really should get better as the year rolls on. It has some promising frontcourt players in **Joakim Noah**, **Chris Richard** and **Al Horford**. Those three big fellas have really improved.

Dick Vitale coached the Detroit Pistons and the University of Detroit in the 1970s before broadcasting ESPN's first college basketball game in December 1979 (he's been an ESPN analyst ever since).

Will there come a time to take sis-boom-bah out of basketball?



Bob Ryan's Journal

BOSTON – I am not about to tell most of you something you don't already know. But sometimes a guy just has to vent.

We have a terribly broken system, and I don't know if we can do anything about it short of shutting it down and go the European route and forget about schools actually putting out basketball teams.

At the high school level, we've kind of done that already. In many areas, a young basketball prospect has minimal interest in what he does for his high school. We live in an AAU world, in case you haven't noticed. Spring and Summer are when it's at.

For the self-styled elite players, and their enablers, school has nothing to do with anything, in fact. They all think they're lottery picks, so who cares about school? We have officially reached the point where the (supposed) top prospects no longer have going to college on their radar screens. It's NBA, NBA, NBA, baby. Now how will any of this be affected by the new NBA age limit, which now forces these kids to make a choice between playing at least one year of college ball or – gasp – heading to the NBDL, or worse? I don't know.

What we do know is that this new twist on the plot will make for even more farcical applications of what our friends in the NCAA love to call the “student-athlete” process. Are we to believe that these kids, who have been forcibly dragged into the college arena, will have even the remotest interest in matters academic during their whirlwind tours of the nation's campuses? Wouldn't you love to see some of the course loads they'll be coming up with for these one-and-done monsters we have created? Of course, it will depend on the scruple quotient of each individual institution, which will actually make this an interesting spectator sport, given the track record of some schools. Not gonna name names here, but you know who you are, and so do we. I suspect some of you will be more creative than even you thought possible in order to accommodate the stud you hope at least gets you to a Regional.

The NBA has been trying to figure out what to do with all these kids it really doesn't want in the first place, and it still cannot get it right. I mean, this has been going on now for 36 years, or from the time Spencer Haywood stamped his feet by refusing to go along with the program and attend a school just to attend a school until four years had passed since he graduated from Detroit's Pershing High School and he could be permitted to play pro ball. Oh, Spencer did go to Trinidad Junior College before helping the USA win the 1968 gold medal in Mexico City, and he did go to the University of Detroit for a year, but that didn't add up to four, so he was considered persona non grata by the NBA.

That's the way it was, then, and no one had ever rocked the boat before. There had been a fine player out of Philadelphia named Ray Scott, for example. He was 6-foot-9 and he had game, for sure, and he enrolled in Portland University for a year before dropping out. The system being the system and Ray Scott being a lad willing to follow the rules, he simply went to play in the Eastern League for

three years until such time as his four years were up. Ray Scott then became a Detroit Piston, launching an 11-year pro career (1961-72), highlighted by a seven-year stretch when he averaged between 15 and 17 ppg every year. He would later coach the team. I'm sure Ray Scott never gave a second's thought to challenging the system.

Spencer Haywood wasn't Ray Scott. Fortunately for him, there was an ABA, and thus Spencer Haywood became a Denver Rocket before his four years were up. This led to a lot of breast-beating and hand-wringing, but to borrow a metaphor that everyone understands, the toothpaste was out of the tube and it wasn't going back in.

Soon we were hearing about “Hardship Cases,” which was fine until someone like Alvan Adams came along, and he wasn't a “Hardship Case” at all, just a very talented 6-9 guy from Oklahoma who wished to turn pro after playing three years of college. So the NBA had to drop the “Hardship” tag and change it to “Early Entry,” allowing even well-off caucasians to apply, if they chose.

It has always been my belief that, if given the choice, the overwhelming percentage of NBA general managers, player personnel directors and coaches who have worked in the league from 1969 to this very moment would vote to

than others, and some were just simply better people. That's life. But it was still men dealing with men, and, yes, it was better all the way around.

I've been thinking about this, and I just cannot imagine a Kareem Abdul-Jabbar not having gone to UCLA, and Bill Walton makes two. I cannot imagine Oscar Robertson not having gone to Cincinnati, Jerry West not having gone to West Virginia, John Havlicek not having gone to Ohio State, Willis Reed not having gone to Grambling or Wes Unseld not having gone to Louisville, and I'm not even speaking of the basketball benefits they derived from their years in school. You always knew you were dealing with an educated person.

Go ahead. Ask the coaches today if they can tell the difference between dealing with the normal NBA rookie and those precious few four-year players who make their way into the league. Those are the players derided in the new culture as chumps for being so foolish and out of it (and, or course, so untalented) that they spent four years in college, some of them even emerging with a degree. It doesn't even have to be four years. Three is better than two, and two is better, etc.

The NBA has to take these kids, even if they don't want to. Let's see how long the 19-year old thing lasts before it winds up in court. The big-time colleges, meanwhile, have all made their peace with the changing reality. Duke, Carolina – doesn't matter – they'll all take a top kid knowing they'll be amazingly fortunate to get three years out of him and grateful to get two. Ask Jim Boeheim how the Carmelo Anthony deal worked out. That's just the way it is.

Of course, it all comes under the heading of hypocrisy. We have to sit there and listen to beleaguered moderators at every NCAA tournament press conference

make sure they say the pompous term “student-athletes,” rather than have their tongues cut out by the NCAA police for referring to the participants as “players.” Well, dammit, they *are* players, and if you must, use a hyphenate tell the truth and say “athlete-students.” I'm surprised the NCAA police aren't monitoring our copy, while they're at it.

But we're guilty, too, and by “we” I most definitely mean “me.” We go along with the story line, covering college basketball (and football, but this is *Basketball Times*, isn't it?) with straight faces because we love the game, love the competition, love the history and love the fact that no one is making us cover lacrosse. (unless you live in Baltimore). We perpetuate the charade knowing that no other country does what we do, making institutions of higher learning the centerpiece of the non-professional athletic basketball/football experience. We're hooked on the drug, so why would we question its existence?

Where was I? I don't know. I told you. I needed to vent.

Bob Ryan is a noted sports columnist who has been with the Boston Globe since 1968, has received the Curt Gowdy media award from the Basketball Hall of Fame and has co-authored books with Larry Bird, Bob Cousy and John Havlicek.

I just cannot imagine a Kareem Abdul-Jabbar not having gone to UCLA, Oscar Robertson not having gone to Cincinnati, Jerry West not having gone to West Virginia, John Havlicek not having gone to Ohio State.

turn the clock back to 1968. They would choose to operate in a world where the only people available to them would be people who had been out of high school four years, and who, presumably, had spent those four years in college, playing basketball and making at least a perfunctory stab at getting an education that might actually prepare them for a place in our extended society. In other words, they would choose to deal with people who are at least reasonably close to being fully-formed human beings.

I truly believe that. They would happily forego the talent boost that even the best of these young kids (i.e., the Moses Malones, the Kevin Garnetts, the LeBron Jameses) have provided in the interest of the whole. I can assure you that there isn't one GM or scout working today who relishes having to attend AAU tournament games, summer camps or high school tournaments as part of their general duties. They would rather not have to be conversant about Greg Oden or O.J. Mayo. They have more than enough to do now that basketball has become so startlingly globalized.

But it's more than that. It's about the basketball, sure, but it's also about the human factor. The NBA used to be about dealing with men, not kids. Players used to present themselves to teams knowing how to practice, knowing basic terminology and just knowing how to act, period. No, it wasn't a perfect world. Some players were smarter



Coach K will represent U.S. proudly as coach of Olympians

Dick Weiss

Hoops

NEW YORK— Duke coach **Mike Krzyzewski** received his first perk after being named coach of the U.S. senior men's basketball team for the 2008 Olympic games in Beijing.

It was a picture of an American flag with the stars pasted on, given to him by his 6-year old grandson, **Joey**. There was an accompanying note that said, "Poppy, I'm glad you're the Olympic coach and I'm also glad you still coach at Duke. Love, Joey."

This is just one of the reasons why Krzyzewski, the ex-West Point cadet, is the right man for the job of resurrecting the image of American basketball.

Krzyzewski has all the necessary credentials – three national championships and 10 trips to the Final Four at Duke, plus a wealth of international experience that includes serving as an assistant on the 1992 Dream team, which dazzled the competition in Barcelona. Krzyzewski has the credibility to command the respect of the NBA general managers, coaches and players.

Krzyzewski always wanted to perform this service for his country.

"I think the people who are involved in this program should embrace it," he said. "When you look up at the scoreboard, it will say the 'United States.' It will never say an individual name. I can promise you that we will put together a team that will serve as an example to the rest of the world of the way the game should be played and the way you conduct yourself."

The United States had a galaxy of stars in 1992. But **Michael, Charles, Patrick, Magic** and **Larry** are no longer around. The last two U.S. men's teams, led by two NBA coaches – **George Karl** of Denver and **Larry Brown** of the Knicks – finished sixth in the 2002 World Championships at Indianapolis and lost three games in Athens. After the U.S. lost to eventual gold medalist Argentina, 89-81, in the 2004 tournament semi-finals, alarm bells began to sound.

The Americans had no answers for **Manu Ginobili**, who ripped them for 29 points, or the back picks and deft passing from **Pepe Sanchez** that turned the game into a layup drill when the Argentinians took control early in the second half. The U.S., mystified by Argentina's zone, shot 42 percent and only 3 for 11 from 3-point range.

Argentina's national team practiced together for three months and played close to 40 games before arriving in Greece.

The Americans had a month to get their act together. They couldn't get it done.

In all fairness, Brown was dealt a bad hand, losing nine players from the team that blew away the competition in the FIBA qualifying Tournament of the Americas in Puerto Rico, beating basically the same Argentinian team by 40 in the gold medal game.

Give Brown three of those players – center **Jermaine O'Neil**, who could have freed up **Tim Duncan** inside; a knockdown shooter such as guard **Ray Allen**; and a heady, patient point guard like either **Jason Kidd** or **Mike Bibby** who could effectively distribute the ball in halfcourt sets – and we might not be having this discussion. Instead, Brown was left with a B team that had no real locker-room leadership – Duncan was too quiet and **Allen**



Besides a net, Mike Krzyzewski hopes to bring home gold in Beijing.

Iverson could only lead by example – and was fleshed out with too many young, immature stars such as **LeBron James** and **Carmelo Anthony** who never played against high-level international competition. James and Anthony never came close to grasping the nuances of the international game, with its 40-minute game, 30-second clock, 20-foot, 6-inch 3-point line, trapezoid lane and its heavy reliance on shooting, passing and chemistry.

"NBA teams would beat international teams most of the time in the NBA," Krzyzewski said. "But this isn't the NBA. NBA players are accustomed to playing defense for between 18 and 24 seconds. You add six more seconds to the shot clock and there's three or four more passes. You can get broken down. That happened a lot to the U.S. team in Indianapolis."

The rest of the world is catching up to the U.S., as evidenced by the fact there will be between 90 and 100 internationals playing in the NBA this season. **Jerry Colangelo**, the U.S. team's executive director, felt the time was right to change the culture. He is forming a national team consisting of between 20 and 25 players who want to represent this country and are willing to make a three-year commitment from 2006-2008 to play in both the World Championships in Japan, the Beijing games and possibly a qualifying tournament.

The time commitment will be for little over a month each year, from the end of July through early September, giving the players a chance to catch their breath before the starting of NBA training camps.

It is this country's best chance to construct a cohesive team of unselfish players who can shoot the ball from the international 3-point range and are willing to use their athleticism to defend over a shot clock that is six seconds longer than the NBA.

Although Colangelo has enough clout to convince a young star like 6-foot-9 center **Amare Stoudemire** of his own Phoenix Suns to buy in, Krzyzewski most likely will not get all of the best players in the NBA. Duncan

sounded like he was fed up after officials constantly put him in early foul problem, and James, perhaps the best young talent in the world, acted like a petulant child with officials from his country's federation when he didn't get his minutes.

But Krzyzewski should get enough quality players like guard **Dwyane Wade** of Miami to form a core eight-man nucleus and then add four specialists. "I think there will be a number of really high end players who would want to do this and for all the right reasons," he claimed.

UConn point guard **A.J. Price** has received the same accelerated rehabilitation as teammate **Marcus Williams** in a deal that could clear his record if it is granted. Price was given 18 months probation and 400 hours community service for his role in the theft of four computers valued at \$11,000 from a campus dorm last summer.

Williams, the Huskies' starting point guard, was suspended for a semester from the university disciplinary committee and will be eligible for the Big East season. Price has been suspended for the season.

The Big East coaches picked Villanova to win the league, but that was before senior forward **Curtis Sumpter** suffered an ACL injury. UConn coach **Jim Calhoun** thought so much of Sumpter, he said he would have voted for him as pre-season player of the year if he had been healthy.

Now that the NCAA has control of the pre-season NIT, soon to be known as the NIT Season Tip Off, it is talking about moving it away from home sites for preliminary games. Instead, it would play four four-team regionals at neutral sites before bringing a Final Four to the Garden over Thanksgiving weekend. The days of granting favors to friends in the selection process and free junkets to Europe with the NIT All-Star team for committee members in the Metropolitan Basketball Association are over.

Kansas coach **Bill Self** continues to methodically rebuild Jayhawks. Self recently got a verbal commitment from 7-0 **Cole Aldrich** of Bloomington, Minn., Jefferson, one of the three best centers in his class, along with 6-8 **Kevin Love** of Lake Oswego, Ore., and 6-11 **Anthony Randolph** of North Little Rock, Ark.. High.

At least there is some good news for Tulane's nomadic team. The Green Wave will return to campus and play 10 games – including their entire Conference USA schedule – at the Fogelman Center. First-year coach **Dave Dickerson** and his team have been encamped in the wake of Hurricane Katrina at Texas A&M, where they will play four games.

Dick Weiss has covered 33 Final Fours for the Philadelphia Daily News and the New York Daily News, has received the Curt Gowdy media award from the Basketball Hall of Fame and has written seven books with Rick Pitino, John Calipari and Dick Vitale.

Where have you gone, Pistol Pete Maravich?



Billy Reed

Perhaps the saddest thing about basketball today is that the coaches have drained all the joy from it. They discourage creativity and reward rigidity. So every team plays more or less the same style as every other team. Where are Paul Westhead and Loyola Marymount when we really need them?

Today's coaches brainwash their players and the public into believing that defense is even more important than offense. But it's not, at least from an aesthetic viewpoint. Anybody who's willing to work hard can play defense. But only the gifted can glide and soar and work magic with the ball in their hands.

Only the gifted can bring us ... Showtime!

The ultimate compliment from any ink-stained wretch is, "I'd pay to watch him play." This is because basketball writers are so shamefully underpaid - this is the truth, and I'd swear to it on a stack of John Wooden biographies - that a player must be truly special to make a writer even remotely consider the frightening possibility of actually having to buy a ticket.

In my case, I would have paid to see Julius Erving in his ABA days. I'd have paid to see Wilt Chamberlain go against Bill Russell and the Boston Celtics. I'd have paid

to see Earvin "Magic" Johnson, Larry Bird, and, of course, Michael Jordan.

But more than any of them, I'd have paid to watch Pistol Pete Maravich in his days at LSU. He was never quite as much fun to watch during his NBA career because his coaches forced him to play under far more restraint than Press Maravich, his dad and coach at LSU, demanded of him.

Another reason Maravich had to tone down his act in the NBA was that his teammates didn't want to get embarrassed by having one of his passes hit them in the head or catch them off guard.

When he graduated from LSU in 1970, Maravich became the first - and maybe still the only - white player to be offered a contract to play with the Harlem Globetrotters. Unfortunately for basketball, the Globies couldn't match dollars with the NBA. But the concept remains as delicious today as it was 35 years ago: Maravich was born to play with *Sweet Georgia Brown* as the background music.

Ah, the Globies.

When you buy a ticket to see them play, you go early because you want to see the pregame warm-ups. That's when they do the "magic circle," an exercise in hoops sleight-of-hand that always delights the crowd.

Wonder why today's pro and college teams don't use their warm-ups as an entertainment vehicle? Instead of boring layup lines and desultory shoot-arounds, why not give the fans something extra for the exorbitant sums they're paying for tickets?

Al McGuire did it during at Marquette. He loved wild uniforms and showtime. But only before the game. Once the ref tossed up the ball, Marquette was one of college hoops' most disciplined teams, protecting the ball hungrily and playing in-your-face defense.

Adolph Rupp, believe it or not considering his reputation as a disciplinarian, loosened up when it came to the warm-ups. In the 1950s, Rupp would post his center at the foul line and run two layup lines simultaneously with the center moving back and forth. The passing was so quick and deft that the ball seldom touched the floor.

And nobody dunked. Nobody even thought about dunking. Dunking was for

Chamberlain and other freaks of nature, not for average-sized players. But Erving, more than anyone, changed that. He literally elevated the dunk to an art form. Everything since, with rare exception, has done little more than variations on the theme.

Maravich, who had plenty of "hops," was not a dunker. He was a shooter. A shooter's shooter, if you will. He still holds all the college scoring records, which is remarkable considering that he played only three varsity seasons and never with the 3-point rule in effect.

His shooting and scoring, Maravich was at his most entertaining when handling the ball. He perfected the crossover dribble long before it became standard equipment for guards, and his passing was sheer wizardry - around his head, behind his back, through his legs. Before LSU freshmen games - freshmen weren't eligible for varsity play in Maravich's day - he would do a one-man version of the Globetrotters' "magic circle."

Maravich packed arenas with fans who came as much to be entertained as to cheer for one team or the other. Fans circled his appearances before the season and anticipated them with growing excitement.

The Pistol's comin' to town ... Get ready for showtime. Did you hear about that pass he threw against Alabama?

It was the same with Erving, Chamberlain, Bird, Magic and Michael. Any time any of them stepped on a floor, there was a possibility that a fan would see something unique - something he, or she, would still be talking about years later.

But today, showtime is as dead as Vaudeville. The occasional explosive dunk is about as good as it gets. Blame the coaches. They take remarkably gifted athletes and stifle their instincts. Remember the line about Jordan from his college days at North Carolina?

The only man who can stop Michael Jordan is Dean Smith.

As I look at this season's preseason All-America selections, I see a lot of nice players and future pros. But I don't see anybody who makes me think, "Man, I've got to go to that game, even if I have to pay." And not to disillusion the coaches, but I'm more interested in the guys on the floor than the ones pacing the sidelines.

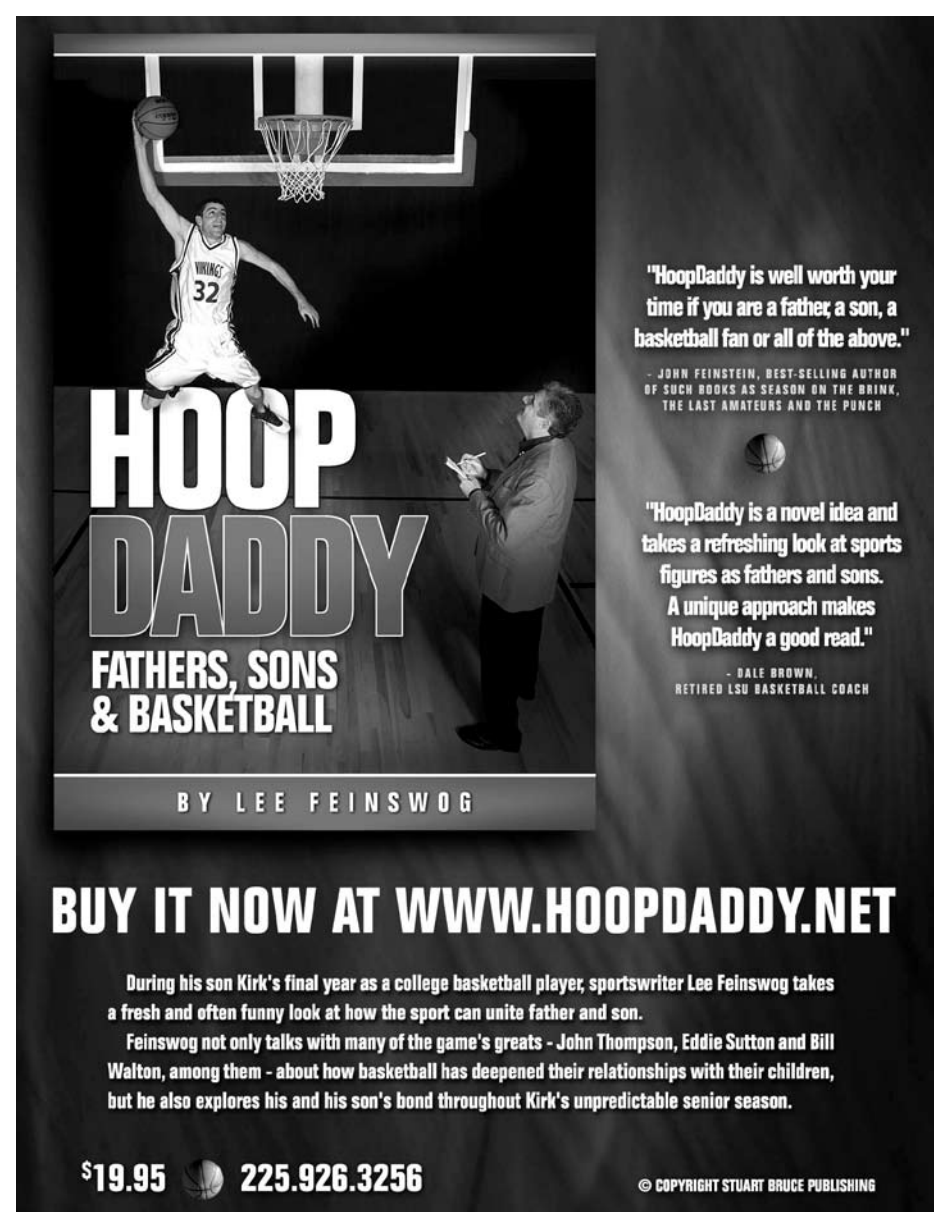
You think I'm wrong?

Well, send me your All-Showtime team for this season, college or pro. I want the names of five players who are worth the steep price of admission, no matter who wins the game. And while you're at it, send me the names of just a couple of coaches who are secure enough to encourage creativity. My e-mail address is breedII@aol.com.

I'm going to do my part by checking out senior Keydren Clark of Saint Peter's. Only 5-feet-9, he's attempting to join Oscar Robertson and Maravich as the only three-time national scoring champions. He also ranked third nationally last season in steals.

Hmmm. This kid has some potential. Wonder what he feels like doing when he hears *Sweet Georgia Brown*?

Billy Reed is a longtime college basketball writer for the Louisville Courier-Journal, Lexington Herald-Leader and Sports Illustrated.





‘Riding With the Blue Moth,’ should be a trip taken with others

John Akers

When last we left you, in November’s “Letter From the Editor,” Bill Hancock’s *Riding With the Blue Moth* was working itself into my reading rotation. We had written that not because a mention of this or any other book on these pages carries the weight of Oprah, but because basketball was losing Hancock, a good man and former NCAA Tournament director, to football, to become the executive director of the BCS.

This month, we return in praise of the book.

Riding With the Blue Moth actually is much less a basketball book than a diary, a travelogue, a repair manual or Chicken Soup for the Broken-Hearted’s Soul. Mike Krzyzewski and Eddie Sutton are mentioned briefly, and that’s about it for the basketball references. But it is the tragic plane crash of Jan. 27, 2001 that took the lives of Bill’s son, Will, and nine others among an Oklahoma State basketball traveling party that led Hancock to write what might be the most important book that you will read this year.

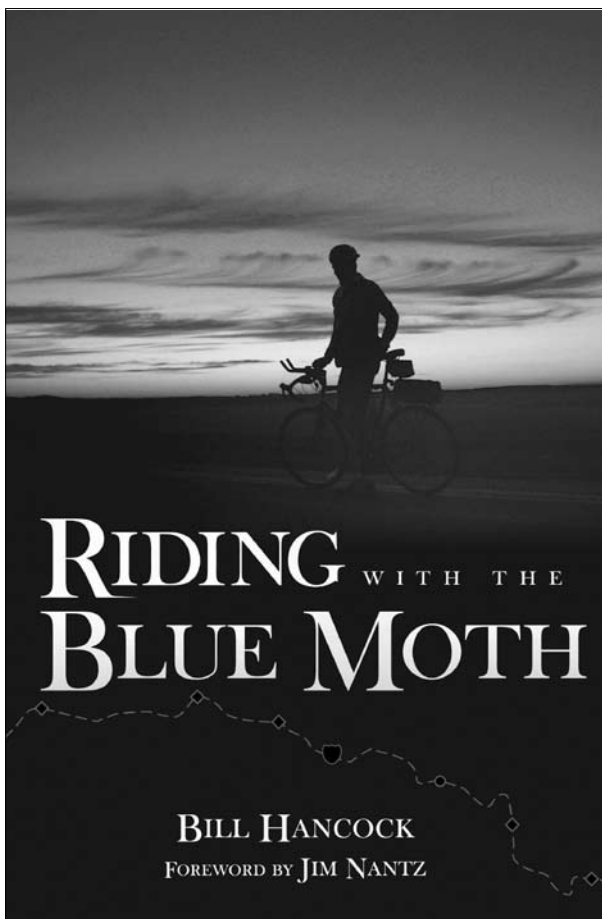
Certainly, the opening 34 pages will be the most heartrending. There, Hancock explains with words that can be read only through welled-up eyes what it’s like to lose a son. For a brief moment, he tells us, he contemplated suicide. Upon these pages, Hancock also concludes while tailgating before the Kansas City Royals’ season opener that the best way he could celebrate Will’s memory is by living life to its fullest and decides to fulfill a lifelong dream of riding a bicycle across the United States. He also introduces us to the blue moth, the words that Hancock, as a child, thought he was hearing when his grandmother spoke of the cold fronts that, in her southern accent, were known as “blue nawthers.” The blue moth becomes a metaphor for the waves of depression that would accompany Hancock along every leg of the 36-day, 2,746-mile trip from Huntington Beach, Calif., to Tybee Island, Ga.

“Not once did we discuss the journey as a balm for our souls,” wrote Hancock, whose wife Nicki drove the van and served as his support team. “That was never our intent. We were going on an adventure. Nothing more.”

Hancock also never intended to write this book, but we are better for having been invited to come along for the ride on his Canondale R600. Though Hancock had run in 15 marathons, his grief was comforted by food, and he finds himself unprepared for those opening stages. Numbness, nausea and the blue moth are his constant companions while he struggles through the first few legs of the trip.

The blue moth never disappears entirely. And Hancock has his dark days, filled with narrow highways and narrow-minded citizens, honking motorists and heel-nipping dogs.

But we notice his mood change as he encounters kindness and openness in unexpected places from people who know nothing about his tragedy. We also learn about cattle trails and kudzu, boll weevils and bicycles, the Journey of the Dead and the night that German and British soldiers of World War I sang Christmas songs together before shooting at each other the next day. Songs begin to pop into this musician’s head again. Play That Funky Music (White Boy). The theme from Petticoat Junction. Ode to Joy. The Notre Dame Fight Song. Lots of songs from Oklahoma, the musical.



The statistician in him counts and records the number of Fritos he eats each day.

Hancock imagines himself becoming a Dog Whisperer, taming the beasts that charge at him by simply speaking softly to them.

Feeling his son’s presence, Hancock talks to Will.

Silliness also begins making guest appearances.

“I still had not seen a single live armadillo,” he writes. “No married live ones, either.”

Or, “Changing a tire is not sprocket science.”

When a doctor suggests that Hancock substitute the Fritos and Vienna sausages that are part of his daily meals with potassium and magnesium tablets, Hancock muses, “Why not just eat the entire Periodic Table?”

Best of all, Hancock introduces us to the many characters he encounters along the way: Arizona Bud Man. One-Eyed Pop in Pie Town. Talkative Freeway Samaritan. The Pregnant Man.

Toward the end of the trip, he meets a large man who sells peaches in Georgia’s searing heat, but “for a gentleman on a bicycle, no charge.” The man says he has no need for money or a nice house or vehicle. “I just want what I know – sellin’ peaches,” he tells Hancock, who decides then and there that the Peach Angel is another in a series of angels – like Clarence Oddbody in his favorite movie, *It’s a Wonderful Life* – who have entered his life.

Perhaps the greatest lesson taken from the trip by Hancock – who concludes each chapter by passing on a lesson learned that day to Andie, the granddaughter who was 72 days old when her father, Will, died – is that he always will have a “Will-sized hole” in his heart and that

the blue moth never will be far away.

“Now I do not try to escape when he arrives,” Hancock writes of the blue moth. “I simply listen to what it has to say and wait quietly for it to fly away.”

The reader learns from his lessons, too, of course. The question becomes what to do with them. It has been suggested that Hancock’s book is life-altering, at least in a subtle way, and I would like to believe that’s true. But books have altered my life before, or so I thought, and it never took long before those bad habits came swooping down again, like a variation of my own blue moth. I suspect that’s true for most of us. A week-altering book might be more like it. A month-altering book would be particularly powerful.

But I also know how powerful a book such as this can be for someone in need. About five years ago, a former sports-writing co-worker, Mark Neuzil, and his wife, Amy Kuebelback, learned that the baby Amy was carrying would die from a heart defect soon after childbirth. Amy wrote a poignant book, *Waiting With Gabriel*, that dealt not only with such unimaginable sorrow as purchasing a tiny casket rather than a stroller, preparing for a funeral rather than for day care, but also the joy she felt during the final months she carried Gabriel to term.

Months after *Waiting With Gabriel* was published, my niece also learned that the baby she was expecting would live only hours after it was born. Like the many who tried to approach Bill Hancock and his friends during the days following Will’s death, I was totally inadequate as an uncle to communicate the sadness that I felt for them. But I at least had a book to offer to them, written by someone who knew exactly how they felt and what words to say. *Waiting With Gabriel* was a great comfort for her. That’s the sort of thing that *Riding With the Blue Moth* can provide long after it has been read by the many whose lives have been touched by Hancock but, hopefully, will never actually feel such sorrow.

The basketball community recently has been losing far too many of its young. Jason Collier of the Atlanta Hawks died in his sleep of an undetermined cause. Bradley Mosley of South Florida lost a two-year battle to cancer. A few months ago, Jackie Jefferson bravely spoke to me about her son, George, a former Saint Peter’s player who died this summer of a heart condition, for a story about George’s roommate, Keydren Clark.

If Hancock’s book were any less powerful, sending along a copy to Jackie Jefferson never would have been a consideration. Even if the thought came up, it would have been allowed to pass. Instead, we picked up the phone and asked Jackie Jefferson for her address, because there was this book that she needed to read.

“I can use all the help I can get,” she said.

If you haven’t read the book, do so. If you have read it, pass it on. Unfortunately, Bill Hancock isn’t the only person who’s riding with the blue moth.

John Akers is entering his fifth season as editor of Basketball Times. He has covered college basketball for the past 25 years, including 16 at the San Jose Mercury News.



**Good is Good...
but it is not Great.**

Be Great.

Play Up.

Boise State
Fresno State
Hawai'i
Idaho
Louisiana Tech
Nevada
New Mexico State
San Jose State
Utah State

WAC
WESTERN ATHLETIC CONFERENCE

play **UP**



Press Conference

Big East commissioner Mike Tranghese

“There seems, nationally, to be a lot excitement about this. I think a lot of that is caused by the unknown. There’s never been a conference this size with this many good basketball teams under one roof.”

This is the day that, back in the spring of 2003, seemed unlikely ever to come.

We’ve had more than 31 months to adjust to the idea of a Big East without Boston College, Miami or Virginia Tech. We’re ready now to embrace the idea of South Florida taking the geographical place of Miami and Midwesterners Cincinnati DePaul, Louisville and Marquette filling out the rest of this dance party.

But forget not the battle that began on April 16, just nine days after the Connecticut women completed a basketball-championship sweep that began with a title won by the Syracuse men.

No one dug in harder during that time than the Big East commissioner Mike Tranghese, who was there from the start of this conference some 26 years ago. He accused the Atlantic Coast Conference the next day of operating “in the dark” and said in emotional news conference days later that “this will be the most disastrous blow to intercollegiate athletics in my lifetime.”

There were national repercussions, to be sure, felt directly by Conference USA and trickling all the way to the Atlantic Sun. But the Big East survived, stronger in basketball, at least, than it was before.

As strong as it was in 1985, when it sent three teams to the Final Four? As strong as 1991, when seven of its nine members were invited to play in the NCAA Tournament?

That remains to be seen. And though some issues remain – regarding scheduling, the Big East tournament and its future as a 16-team conference – the fact that the Big East is with us still could be viewed as one of college basketball’s minor miracles.

Tranghese took time from his schedule to discuss the Big East’s past, present and future with BT managing editor John Akers.

BT: You’ve introduced the “new” Big East to the public before, but not as a basketball conference. You must be proud. This league that two years ago was being left for dead now is being hailed as, possibly, America’s best basketball conference.

MT: Two years ago, we were facing extinction. Thanks to our president and athletic directors, they just looked at this and felt it would serve all of their best interests by staying together. And that sounds nice on paper. But then we had to put a league together.

We’ve had the opportunity to present the conference from a football perspective, but, obviously, this is the first time we’re going to roll out all 16 and talk about

basketball.

There seems, nationally, to be a lot excitement about this. I think a lot of that is caused by the unknown. There’s never been a conference this size with this many good basketball teams under one roof.

BT: Of course, putting together a 16-team conference must come with challenges.

MT: It’s been a pretty hellacious two-year period for the people in my office. I think that now the work is done, and we’re going to deal with the reality of it. It’s here, and we’re going to begin playing.

BT: Television has created an obvious imbalance in the strength of your 16-game conference schedules. There isn’t a Rutgers or a South Florida among the three home-and-away games that were scheduled for Connecticut, Villanova, Louisville, Syracuse and Cincinnati. Is this the way of the world or something that must be re-addressed?

MT: We had that before, which everyone has sort of forgotten. We had imbalanced schedules.

My comment is this: The day we went beyond nine members, we got too big. But so has everyone else gotten too big.

If you’re looking at something from a pure basketball perspective, you should play double round robin. The day our conference went to 10, and then to 11, we walked away from that. But so has the ACC, and so has the Big Ten and the SEC. We’re all too big if you’re looking at it from a pure basketball perspective.

We had an imbalanced schedule before, but I think it’s become more pronounced because we have so many good teams. And now, in order to fulfill our television contractual arrangements, we haven’t been able to go back and readjust it, because we got larger. We had made commitments under our old 12- and 14-team format, and so we’ve got a real imbalance. Those schools at the top are going to play a more difficult schedule.

But we had that last year, when we were only 11. There was a lot of squawking in our league last year, because certain people felt they had a more difficult schedule. But I think that’s going to happen no matter what scheduling format we adopt, once you get out of true round robin.

BT: There also aren’t a lot of Top 25 teams in your schools’ non-conference schedules, for obvious reasons. Does that concern you?

MT: I don’t tell our schools how to schedule. And I know our league is difficult, but if people are going to

ignore playing quality non-conference games, then in my mind, at some place, at some time, they’re going to pay a price for that.

I sat in the tournament selection committee room. I know what drives it. The committee will give us full, full consideration for the difficult conference schedule that all of our teams are going to play. But if people think that allows them to get off the hook in terms of playing some quality non-conference games, then I think some people are going to be damaged by it. And I told our coaches that.

BT: Also, not all of your coaches agreed with the decision to go to a 12-team Big East tournament rather than a 16-team tournament.

MT: None of them are in agreement, I can tell you that (laughing).

BT: Can you imagine that changing, or is this, too, the way of the world?

MT: No, I can’t imagine it changing. With Dave Gavitt before me, and now in my tenure, I don’t believe either one of us have ever taken a position that was in such direct opposition to what our coaches were from.

I respect our coaches for wanting to bring all 16 teams. I especially admire our coaches from our most successful programs. I mean, no one was more vocal about bringing 16 teams to New York than Jimmy Boeheim and Jimmy Calhoun. And you know where their programs are. You wouldn’t think it would be a question for them. But they felt very strongly about it.

As I told our coaches finally, first of all, logistically, our tournament right now runs Wednesday through Saturday. To start this tournament on a Tuesday would be a logistical nightmare. You have to go through all the ramifications of it. You’d have to have certain top teams playing on Tuesday, certain top teams playing on Wednesday. Obviously, the team playing on Tuesday would have a huge advantage.

What drove me, aside from the logistics and forcing our fans to come in a day earlier, which I think would have been a real problem, is that we’re interested in winning national championships. That’s what our goal is every year. If we’re going to force our top four teams to be in a position to play four games in four days in a row, that is not the way that I think any of our teams should ever prepare for the NCAA basketball tournament.

Years ago, we played the championship game on

national television on CBS on a Sunday. We made the decision to go to Saturday night on ESPN because I thought the extra day of preparations for the NCAA Tournament would pay dividends.

When we made the decision, I got vilified pretty good for it. But I tell people, you were right. All we did was win the national championship in '99 and then win in '02 and '03.

Those teams were really good, but I believe ending on Saturday helped our teams. To now to say to those teams, you're now going to play four days in a row, it just doesn't make any sense.

So do I see us changing that? No, I don't.

BT: Can you take us back to the time and events that changed the Big East's course? It came just eight days after Syracuse had won the men's basketball title and Connecticut had won the women's championship. And then – wham!

MT: What happened was, Syracuse had won a national championship in New Orleans, and I flew to Atlanta, where Connecticut beat Tennessee to win our league's fifth national championship in five years and Connecticut's fourth in five years. Our conference was on a pretty good high. It was an incredible accomplishment. Plus, I think we were feeling pretty good about ourselves in football, because as we looked at ourselves, particularly with Miami and Virginia Tech, we knew we were getting better and were anxiously looking forward to negotiating our football contract, because we thought we were under-valued.

I think in those immediate eight days following Atlanta, I remember telling a couple of people that I had never felt better about where our league had been since I had taken over.

We had been through a lot of tumultuous times. We had to expand. We had to bring football in. We had to bring more football members in. Our conference had gotten larger. We had to survive the Miami football probation period.

And all of a sudden, I think we were feeling pretty good about where we were. I felt for the first time in a long time, we were taking a deep breath and saying, 'Now we're going to move forward. We've got a lot of things going on.'

Eight days later, I found out in sort of a crazy, indirect way that I had schools that had been in pretty significant conversations with the ACC for some period of time.

BT: How did you find out about it?

MT: Really, it was through a media call about something else. I haven't talked about it a lot. I think one of our schools, Pittsburgh, was engaged in conversations with Skip Prosser about the possibility of him coming to Pittsburgh, and Pitt had gotten permission from Wake Forest. What I found out was that in those conversations, people were telling Skip, 'Why would you go to Pittsburgh? We're about to take the Big East's teams, and it's about to break up.'

My conversation was not with Skip and it was not with anyone at Wake Forest. But somebody else found out about it and called me to tell me about it. And I was flabbergasted.

First, I didn't believe him. Then when I picked up the phone and confronted a couple of our schools, they didn't admit it and they didn't deny it, and I could tell by the nature of the calls what was going on.

BT: Much has happened since then. Does it seem like yesterday, or are those feelings still pretty fresh?

MT: I don't know that I'll ever forget what that felt like. It felt like a punch in the stomach. I just felt that some people should have told us that they were thinking seriously about it. I have always maintained that people have the right to get up and leave. I think it's part of where we are.

But you're not in partnership with people for as long as we have – and I thought we did a good job for them, and they certainly did a good job for us – and then go out and have these clandestine talks with another conference.

I think you need to stand up and tell your people, 'Hey, we're not happy. We have to look at this.' They elected not to do it in that manner.

It left a lot of hard and bitter feelings amongst a lot of our members.

BT: There wasn't much precedent for rebuilding a conference with such a short but proud history. Did you have a place to turn

MT: If you remember, the departure of the teams took place in two parts. The ACC took Miami and Virginia Tech, and so our people immediately came together to try to stay together.

I felt a lot of people ignored what was going to happen. I told them – *I told them!* – that a 12th school was going to leave, and it was probably going to be BC. I don't know that people necessarily believed me.

What happened internally at that time was, our people were talking about separating at that time, going to the right with our football schools and to the left with our basketball schools. When I was a party to that meeting, I told them that I wasn't going to be a party to either one of their groups. If we were going to separate, someone was going to have

*For the first time in a long time,
we were taking a deep breath. Eight days later,
I found out that I had schools
that had been in pretty significant conversations
with the ACC for some period of time.*

to manage the conference during the period of separation and someone was going to have to manage what we call the dissolution and the distribution of assets. Plus, I was sitting there with employees. And I felt the only way that I could service the employees and service the membership was to literally take myself out of the room, because I was not going to go to work for either one of the groups.

I thought it was probably, for me, maybe the most difficult and emotional moment in the process. I basically was going to walk away from something that had been such a part of my life. And I did, and it was a hard thing to do. But I felt it was the only thing to do at that point.

I think the basketball schools and the football schools began to move forward at that point. They were going to go separately.

I wasn't involved in those talks, but I just got a strong inkling that they were beginning to see that that wasn't the best course of action to undertake. They finally came back to us and said, 'Maybe we ought to talk about staying together.'

It was at that point in time that I recommended that we stay together. There was a way to do it. We'd have to reach out for new members. We began to aggressively move forward with that plan and began to engage in discussions with other people. It was right in the middle of those discussions that the ACC extended the invitation to Boston College.

It came as no surprise to me, because I told everyone that it was going to happen. I think it surprised some of our people.

BT: As you know, there are those who believe that after five years, that there are fractures along football and basketball schools that will split this league into two eight-team conferences.

MT: I think there are a lot of people who think that way for two reasons. There are a lot of people who don't understand it, so if you don't understand it, you say it's going to break up. And then there are those who want it to break up.

I think our presidents have invested too much to just have this thing break up. And I think there are too many good reasons to stay together. If our basketball is as good as I think it can be, and we have the kind of quality that I think we can have ... the reaction to our tournament in New York is already out of sight. There are going to be so many reasons to stay together.

What I tell people is that the fact that we are 16 has absolutely no effect whatsoever on whether we're going to be successful in football. But I think a certain group of people thinks that the fact that we are 16 hurts our football. Which is ludicrous. There's no correlation there. The football people negotiate their contracts and run it separately. They keep all the money. And then we have a separate arrangement on the basketball side.

A lot of people look at it and say, 'How's this going to work?' I think the biggest challenge – and I told our presidents this – is that we take it for granted. I don't think that we have. We've gone out and hired someone – and that's Dave Gavitt's son, Danny, who was an athletic director at Bryant – and his job is basketball. Men's basketball, 365 days a year. He's going to deal with it constantly, and I think we're going to pay attention to it, and I think we can make it work for everybody.

I know there are some skeptics.

BT: Can you give us an idea of how many other schools and potential models were considered?

MT: Once we decided to go to 16, we had a clear pecking order on the football side. And when BC left, we had already talked about the possibility of needing a third team, because I kept telling people that they were going to leave.

We needed three football schools. We only talked to two at the time. I received the call from Father Leahy of Boston College on a Sunday, talked to our schools on Sunday night and made contact with our third school on Monday. And had already talked to Conference USA. We physically got together with the third school four days later, on a Friday.

Basically, heard from BC on a Sunday and literally eight days later, we knew the three football schools that we were going to invite.

We had talked separately with our basketball schools and really wanted to hear where they were coming from and the schools that they were thinking about. Interestingly, the schools that they were interested in were the schools that I was most interested in. And they were the schools that the football schools were most interested in.

And that was Marquette and DePaul. Markets. Midwest tradition. And it gave some linkage to Louisville, Cincinnati and Notre Dame. It moved pretty quickly at that point.

Other than those people, we did not reach out to anybody else. There were a lot of other schools that contacted us, and I was quite candid with them that we had done a lot of research and really knew the direction to go in.

BT: One of the more memorable moments of that summer two years ago was when the mild-mannered commissioner of the Big East tore into the ACC with a fiery news conference. And it was very understandable, coming from the only commissioner who had been with his conference since its birth. Was that passion pouring

forth, or a bit of a calculated rallying cry that presidents, ADs and coaches needed to hear? Or maybe both?

MT: First of all, there were some people who said that speech contributed to the departure of our schools. That is the biggest bunch of crap I've ever heard in my life.

They were already gone. You sit and you gauge and you react. They were emotionally gone.

I just felt at that point in time, our people needed to have someone stand up for them. They had not been dealt with properly, in my opinion. I've been criticized for being as aggressive as I was, but the schools that were just sitting there were dealt an incredible blow, and we were now going to be faced with one of the most traumatic periods in our athletic careers. I just felt it was time for somebody to stand up.

My attitude was, if they felt I was wrong, they could fire me.

I didn't have a single president criticize me for that. I think our presidents felt strongly that what I said was correct. Maybe in hindsight, maybe I should have done it differently.

But I do know this: No matter what I did at that point in time, those schools were leaving. In my mind, that was a done deal. In fact, I had received a call from John Swofford that week, saying he had the votes to take in the new members. Now as it turns out, the three schools he was talking about were not the three who left.

BT: What is the relationship today with the ACC? Is there any? Will there be a Big East/ACC Challenge any time in the future?

MT: I think when I'm gone, it will probably make things easier. I think there are still some strong feelings. I think I'm probably going to have to be gone for that to happen.

But I have little doubt that if, down the road, it makes some sense to have something between the ACC and the Big East, and it makes business sense, then the parties will get together.

John Swofford and I have engaged in a lot of things together since then. It hasn't been easy for him, and it hasn't been easy for me, because we're the up-front people.

John didn't expand the conference on his own. Those were presidential decisions. And our schools that left, those were presidential decisions. So it was the presidents who did what they did, and athletic directors and commissioners got put in the forefront of the fight.

We're engaged with the ACC in the BCS, because we have to be. It makes sense for both of us. I don't hesitate to pick up the phone and call John. I don't think he hesitates to call me.

But I still think there are a lot of feelings there. It probably lessens with each day. And I think when I'm gone ... I think I'm the face of the battle, to be perfectly honest with you. And I'm certain that for a lot of people in the ACC, I'm not at the top of their Christmas list right now.

BT: You've had to re-invent this conference now more than once, starting with the addition of football schools such as Pitt and Miami. Is the Big East still a very powerful work in progress?

MT: I hope this is it for awhile. But after what we saw three years ago, I'm not naïve enough to say never. We just don't know. You've got to continue to monitor the landscape.

I don't know that we can get bigger. I just don't see why getting bigger would ever make sense.

But our football conference has only eight members, and if the right school came along, I know they would have to strongly consider it.

BT: Here's a softball for you: Has the Big East become the nation's greatest basketball league?

MT: I've already told our coaches: 'Don't you ever

say that we're the best.' I'm being candid with you now. That's arrogance.

What we've always said is that we think we're one of the best. We probably are the deepest. What's the best? Is it winning a national championship? Is it getting teams into the NCAA Tournament? I don't know what the standard is for being the best.

What we want to be is that, on an annual basis, when people talk about the three or four best conferences, we want to be one of those conferences that are always viewed that way. But I think that was happening before we expanded.

BT: You might have set the standard in '85. Or maybe in '91.

MT: We set an unusual standard in '85, to at a minimum to be considered among the best conferences in the country, and I think we'll continue to be that way, only bigger. Hopefully, we're going to qualify more teams into the NCAA Tournament.

But I'm never going to be arrogant enough to say we're the best. You can't be the best every year. I think that's an unrealistic goal. But I think you can be amongst the best every year.

BT: You just referred to the number of teams being selected for the tournament as a benchmark for success. Is that the coaches' greatest concern, how many teams they're going to get into the tournament?

MT: They're very concerned about it. I'm not nervous about it at all. If they do what they're supposed to do, we'll

I still think there are a lot of feelings there. It probably lessens with each day. I think I'm the face of the battle, to be perfectly honest with you. And I'm certain that for a lot of people in the ACC, I'm not at the top of their Christmas list right now.

get a lot of teams into the tournament.

The NCAA basketball committee did something pretty historic this summer, and everyone's kind of forgotten about it. They acknowledged that with the expansion of conferences – and, obviously, the Big East is at the forefront of that – that they can't accommodate a lot of teams unless they change the bracketing rule. They've made a significant change. They said through last year that teams from the same conference could only meet in the regional semifinal. They've made an enormous commitment. Now, if conferences start to qualify a record number of teams, then we may have teams meet as early as the second round.

The thing about it is that the formula to get teams into the tournament hasn't changed. It's quality wins. You get quality wins in two forms. You either beat the best teams in your league. Or you beat good teams outside your conference.

I know from having been in that room that if you're a great team from the ACC, SEC, the Big Ten, the Big 12 or the Big East, and you finish first or second, you're going to get in the tournament. But that's not what we're talking about.

We're talking about the teams on the so-called bubble. And the way those teams get in is two ways: quality conference wins and non-conference. If people think they're just going to avoid playing quality non-conference games and it's just going to work out, it isn't going to work out. The formula hasn't changed.

BT: You served on the committee for a long time – from 1997-2001. Was the conference in reality as steadfast in evaluating at-large teams regardless of conference affiliation, or did members sometimes take a peak at those numbers and say, 'This conference really doesn't deserve that many.'

MT: I was on the committee for five years and chaired it for one, and never did I hear a conversation, officially or unofficially, be about the number of teams from a conference.

Now, does it enter a person's subconscious? It does. But I think the greatest protection that we have against that is the media. If we have a lot of teams that deserve to get in, and there's a sense that we're being ignored, the media will come down heavy.

But I don't think it's going to be a problem. I've talked to the people who run the tournament. I've talked to committee members. And I get a sense that they're going to take the 34 best at-large teams.

But I've said that you can't start griping if you don't get in, saying that you're playing in this powerful conference. You still have to beat good teams and play quality non-conference games. You're not going to get in because you're a member of this league. It just doesn't work that way.

BT: During your term on the committee, there were a few examples of Big Ten teams earning a seventh bid for their league despite finishing with sub-.500 records. Purdue made it in 1999 and Iowa and Penn State in 2001 under those conditions. All three actually got in quite comfortably. Do you remember those examples and view them as assurances for qualified members of your league?

MT: The year I was chair, we took Georgia at 16-14. People yelled and screamed, but they played an unbelievable schedule.

Alabama didn't get in, and Alabama was really upset with me because I made comments about them. But Mark Gottfried and I talked right after that. I called Mark. Since then, take a look at Alabama's schedule. Mark has changed the way he schedules. Two years ago, I'm in New York, in my office, and there's this call from Mark Gottfried. I'm thinking, "What the heck is Mark calling me for?"

And Mark says, "Do you mind me bothering you?"

I said, "Of course not."

He says, "What do you think our chances are?"

I started laughing and said, "You know I'm not on the committee?"

He says, "I know, but you're the one who got us to play this schedule."

I said, "Mark, I don't know, but I can tell you that you're in a better position to get in today because of what you did in non-league play."

The next day, Mark played in the first round of the SEC tournament and lost.

And he got in.

BT: If this current membership had been in place since the tournament went to 64 teams in 1985, the Big East would have ranged from five to nine bids per season rather than three to seven. Does five to nine – and typically six – from here on sound about right to you?

MT: I've never talked to our coaches about the number of teams. I don't want to establish a number. We don't know what it is.

But I think there were some years when we would have had a record number of teams, based on performance.

It's a new era, and we're going to find out what it's like. It's the biggest fear of our coaches, but I just don't think there's any agenda to limit our number of teams.



Inside THE ATLANTIC 10

2005-06 ATLANTIC 10 PRESEASON ALL-CONFERENCE TEAMS

MEN'S BASKETBALL (as selected by coaches and media)

FIRST-TEAM	Cl.	Pos.	Ht.	PPG	RPG	AST	STL	BLK
Stanley Burrell, XU	So.	G	6-3	12.7	3.2	60	23	4
Mardy Collins, TU	Sr.	G	6-6	17.5	5.9	109	85	11
Bryant Dunston, FOR	So.	F	6-8	14.9	8.6	44	32	67
Rashaun Freeman, UM	Jr.	F/C	6-9	15.4	7.8	29	26	13
Mike Hall, GW	Sr.	F	6-8	10.6	8.0	56	29	14
Bryant McAllister, DUQ	Sr.	G	6-3	16.1	4.0	83	54	1
Pops Mensah-Bonsu, GW	Sr.	F	6-9	12.6	6.6	24	26	46
Monty Scott, UD	Sr.	F	6-6	11.1	4.6	21	10	9
Steven Smith, LAS	Sr.	F	6-7	20.3	8.5	60	47	23
Curtis Withers, CHA	Sr.	F	6-8	18.0	8.1	49	31	25
SECOND-TEAM								
Kieron Achara, DUQ	Jr.	F/C	6-9	11.5	6.7	30	21	46
Mitchell Baldwin, CHA	Sr.	G	6-2	7.5	2.9	107	36	2
Justin Cage, XU	Jr.	F	6-6	11.1	5.6	62	30	7
Dwayne Lee, SJU	Sr.	G	6-0	9.4	2.8	188	39	2
Danilo Pinnock, GW	Jr.	G	6-5	13.4	5.1	62	45	16
Ahmad Smith, SBU	Sr.	G	6-5	14.2	6.2	98	25	9
Chet Stachitas, SJU	Sr.	G/F	6-5	10.8	2.6	71	29	2
Marcus Stout, FOR	So.	G	6-4	13.6	3.1	71	34	4
Kevin Streenberge, UR	Sr.	C	6-11	12.6	6.0	16	16	39
Mark Tyndale, TU	So.	G	6-5	12.5	5.5	77	37	2
DEFENSIVE TEAM								
Justin Cage, XU	Jr.	F	6-6	11.1	5.6	62	30	7
Mardy Collins, TU	Sr.	G	6-6	17.5	5.9	109	85	11
Carl Elliott, GW	Jr.	G	6-4	8.2	3.8	138	79	5
Dwayne Lee, SJU	Sr.	G	6-0	9.4	2.8	188	39	2
Pops Mensah-Bonsu, GW	Sr.	G	6-3	16.1	4.0	83	54	1
ROOKIE TEAM								
Dionte Christmas, TU	Fr.	G/F	6-5	18.0				
Jordan Fowler, SJU	Fr.	G	6-5	23.6	8.0	4.5*		
Jerrell Lewis, CHA	Fr.	G	6-2	25.0		7.0		
Charles Little, UD	Fr.	F	6-5	20.6	10.3			
Chris Lowe, UM	Fr.	G	6-0	11.1		6.5		
Ahmad Nivins, SJU	Fr.	F	6-9	15.0	10.0			
B.J. Raymond, XU	Fr.	G/F	6-6	20.8	7.8	3.0		
Kahiem Seawright, URI	Fr.	F	6-7	19.1	15.0	5.0		

*2003-04 statistics

2005-06 ATLANTIC 10 MEN'S PREDICTED ORDER OF FINISH

- | | |
|---------------------------|---------------------|
| 1. George Washington (38) | 8. Fordham (1) |
| 2. Charlotte (18) | 9. Rhode Island |
| 3. Temple (8) | 10. La Salle |
| 4. Xavier | 11. Richmond |
| 5. Dayton | 12. Duquesne |
| 6. Saint Joseph's | 13. Saint Louis |
| 7. Massachusetts | 14. St. Bonaventure |

2005-06 ATLANTIC 10 WOMEN'S PREDICTED ORDER OF FINISH

- | | |
|--------------------------|---------------------|
| 1. Temple (11) | 8. Saint Joseph's |
| 2. Xavier (5) | 9. Duquesne |
| 3. George Washington (4) | 10. Rhode Island |
| 4. Richmond | 11. La Salle |
| 5. Charlotte | 12. Fordham |
| 6. Massachusetts | 13. St. Bonaventure |
| 7. Dayton | 14. Saint Louis |

First-place votes in parenthesis

WOMEN'S BASKETBALL (as selected by coaches and media)

FIRST-TEAM	Cl.	Pos.	Ht.	PPG	RPG	AST	STL	BLK
Kimberly Beck, GW	So.	G	5-8	8.0	2.1	164	86	14
Tara Boothe, XU	Sr.	F	6-1	20.6	8.0	30	35	18
Saona Chapman, UR	Sr.	G	5-8	11.6	3.5	137	54	3
Stefanie Collins, SBU	Sr.	G	5-6	13.7	3.0	64	46	2
Sakellie Daniels, CHA	Sr.	G	5-7	15.1	7.5	153	76	7
Candice Dupree, TU	Sr.	C	6-2	16.3	9.1	55	70	66
Kamesha Hairston, TU	Jr.	G	6-0	12.5	6.1	52	70	17
Crista Ricketts, LAS	Jr.	F	6-1	15.4	6.0	30	15	19
Jessica Simmonds, GW	Sr.	F/C	6-2	14.4	7.1	58	65	37
Cara Wright, UD	Sr.	F	6-0	12.2	8.6	18	30	24
SECOND-TEAM								
Aiga Bautre, DUQ	Sr.	G	5-11	15.2	4.1	82	28	11
Pam Brown, CHA	Sr.	F	6-0	12.8	5.7	28	23	5
Christina Campion, UR	Jr.	F	6-0	9.8	6.5	45	17	10
Miranda Green, XU	Jr.	G	5-6	10.4	2.6	130	45	3
Suntana Granderson, XU	Jr.	G	5-10	10.7	2.5	48	42	7
Loui Hall, DUQ	Jr.	F	6-0	13.5	5.7	48	19	13
Safi Mojidi, URI	So.	G	5-6	11.8	2.9	89	71	8
Davineia Payne, LAS	Sr.	G	5-9	11.2	5.0	47	32	5
Tanya Rhodes, URI	Sr.	F	5-9	13.1	7.1	41	72	7
Pam Rosanio, UM	So.	G/F	5-10	10.9	3.1	60	34	8
DEFENSIVE TEAM								
Kimberly Beck, GW	So.	G	5-8	8.0	2.1	164	86	14
Sakellie Daniels, CHA	Sr.	G	5-7	15.1	7.5	153	76	7
Candice Dupree, TU	Sr.	C	6-2	16.3	9.1	55	70	66
Kamesha Hairston, TU	Jr.	G	6-0	15.4	6.1	52	70	17
Tanya Rhodes, URI	Sr.	F	5-9	13.1	7.1	41	72	7

ATLANTIC 10 TO HOLD 2007 & 2008 MEN'S BASKETBALL CHAMPIONSHIPS IN ATLANTIC CITY

ATLANTIC CITY, NJ, Nov. 10 - The Atlantic 10 Conference will hold its 2007 and 2008 men's basketball championships at Boardwalk Hall in Atlantic City, NJ.

"We are delighted to announce that the Atlantic 10's premier event will be held in one of the country's premier entertainment centers," said A-10 commissioner Linda Bruno. "Atlantic City has undergone a tremendous revitalization in recent years, as anyone who has been here recently can attest. Boardwalk Hall, which has also undergone a remarkable renovation, is a beautiful venue for college basketball. The city offers our alumni and fans great family entertainment and the Atlantic 10 will keep up its end of the bargain by providing great basketball in 2007 and 2008."

Boardwalk Hall was dedicated on May 31, 1929. Known primarily as the home of the Miss America Pageant from 1940-2004, Boardwalk Hall was placed on the United States Register of Historic Places as a National Historic Landmark on February 27, 1987. Most recently, Boardwalk Hall underwent an extensive restoration and rehabilitation process. Begun in November 1998, the five-phase renovation cost \$90 million and transformed Boardwalk Hall into a state-of-the-art special events arena under the auspices of the New Jersey Sports and Exposition Authority.

Boardwalk Hall has hosted numerous athletic events, including world championship boxing, the New Jersey State High School Wrestling Championships, professional tennis, college football, minor league hockey, and college basketball. Both Saint Joseph's and Temple played at Boardwalk Hall in 1996 and the facility will host Villanova this December.



Leaving it to Flip to keep Pistons steady

Keith Langlois

When Joe Dumars was left with a coaching vacancy in early July, after the Larry Brown melodrama had played out and long after almost every other NBA team had already finished the annual rite of musical coaching chairs, he wasn't necessarily looking for the anti-Larry.

It just worked out that way.

It was obvious before the regular season ended that replacing Brown was a distinct possibility. The notoriously neurotic basketball savant had been all over the map since even before the season began. He put the Detroit Pistons in a tough spot by delaying hip surgery until the week of the season opener, he mused openly about other jobs, he bizarrely suggested he was up to coaching practices but not games after a second surgery, he asked for permission to pursue the Cleveland presidency and he brazenly engaged management in a game of chicken at the height of their title defense.

It's exhausting even in the recounting. Imagine how the Pistons felt living it.

You don't have to imagine. Just look at them now and contrast it with how they looked then. If there's one unmistakable and remarkable aspect, it's the joy and confidence with which the Pistons began the season.

They had nothing against Brown. There was no revolt afoot, as there was in Rick Carlisle's dying days.

But the perpetually charged atmosphere that having Brown at the center of your environment creates wears on people, and it wore out the Pistons.

They needed a new voice, preferably a calm, soothing voice. Flip Saunders' is the perfect voice.

Again, it's early. But the timing on this one could not have been more serendipitous for either party.

Dumars, for his part, needed a coach capable of batting cleanup. It was OK to gamble on a first-time coach like Carlisle with a young team still finding its way. It would have been acceptable to give that team someone who'd failed elsewhere under trying circumstances. But the Pistons that Brown left needed someone who hit the ground with instant credibility. A team that's been to two straight Finals isn't going to accept untested methods from an unproven coach. These Pistons needed a coach they regarded as worthy of the seat at the end of their bench. And Saunders is all of that.

Never mind the rap that not until the penultimate of his 10 years in Minnesota did he win a playoff series. Not once in those first eight years were the T-Wolves eliminated by a lesser opponent.

The Pistons knew Saunders had the right stuff by playing against his teams all those years. Chauncey Billups, as important as any voice on Dumars' payroll, gave the hiring enthusiastic endorsement.

Had the Pistons been run out of the playoffs early or the NBA put a moratorium on coaching moves until after the postseason, Saunders might not have been the no-brainer choice he eventually became. He would have been among a handful on a short list that would have included,

at minimum, Mo Cheeks and Nate McMillan. But Cheeks had long since been snapped up by Philadelphia and McMillan was thought to be headed back to Seattle until Portland bowled him over with major money.

That left Saunders as a choice so obvious, he was hired less than 48 hours after Brown slithered out of town. What makes Saunders so perfect is his demeanor. Most people concede that Brown is the NBA's reigning genius, but he's also unquestionably its reigning diva. If Saunders is less than brilliant, he's uncannily shrewd. Brown projected an aura that made those around him feel his were the only observations that mattered. There's no question that he made all the Pistons better players individually. Or that he taught them valuable lessons in team-building.

Now they need what Saunders offers – a structure that challenges their creativity while imparting to them a faith in their judgment and basketball IQ.



*What makes
Flip Saunders
so perfect is his
demeanor.
The Pistons need
what he offers – a
system that challenges
their creativity while
imparting faith
in their judgment.*

A team capable of winning championships likes to think their coach trusts them to toss the ball inbounds without special instruction. The confidence their new coach has displayed in these Pistons has been immediate and ongoing and genuine, and it's drawing out the best in them. They'd yet to lose a game over the season's first few weeks, never mind endure a three-game losing streak. No starter had suffered so much as a hangnail, let alone a sprained ankle or – horrors – a blown Achilles. And it was still too early for anyone to feel slighted over lack of minutes in a seriously crowded rotation. Those disclaimers out of the way – wow.

Cleanup hitter Flip Saunders, to extend the metaphor, has been nothing short of a home run for Joe Dumars.

It's early. The back-to-backs, the road trips, the tedium and the unexpected will test them all and test the bonds of the coach-team relationship.

But based on everything we've seen, and everything we presume to know about the parties involved and the game they play, the Pistons made the perfect choice given their circumstances and their place on the continuum of an NBA contender.

Keith Langlois is a columnist for the Daily Oakland (Mich.) Press.



Dick Jerardi

Our instant information society has changed so much for the better (how did any of us know anything before the Internet?) that we tend to forget how it has also changed so much for the worse.

We demand more information. We demand it quicker. With that, we demand instant analysis and instant conclusions. What we forget is that much of life is just too complex for that. All the facts don't come out in days or even weeks. Sadly, few of us are willing to wait anymore.

Take the rape case against former La Salle players Mike Cleaves and Gary Neal. When the allegations first surfaced in June 2004, it was a giant story in Philadelphia. There were daily revelations. There were sources that purported to know something. There were quick conclusions drawn.

La Salle distanced itself from its men's and women's basketball coaches, Billy Hahn and John Miller. Both were eventually forced to resign. Neal and Cleaves were pretty much roundly condemned as just another example of out of control athletes. The coaches, it was intimated, had covered up another rape from 2003.

Everything fit in a nice, neat stereotype. There is one problem with stereotypes. They are stereotypes, not reality.

In November 2005, Neal and Cleaves were both found not guilty of the eight charges against them. The verdict generated a day's worth of interest.

Unlike the pundits, the jury actually heard both sides of the story. It was quite seamy, but also quite confusing. It was, in the end, a classic case of reasonable doubt. There really was no way to be certain what happened that night in a La Salle dorm room with Cleaves and Neal and a camp counselor. There was conjecture and assumption, but not enough for a guilty verdict.

So Neal and Cleaves got on with their lives. Hahn, however, is still without a job in the business he loves. Miller has been given a chance to get back into college coaching as an assistant, but, at the moment, he is content



*Let's just say
Flo Larkai
gets off or
the charges
against him
are dropped.
Who then says
they are sorry
to Billy Hahn
(above)? The
answer, sadly,
is probably
nobody.*

continued on next page, column one

La Salle leaves its victims behind

continued from previous page

with his new life in a new job with some high school coaching mixed into it.

Hahn and Miller were forced to resign because of the "other" rape case. One of Miller's former players came forward in June 2004, telling police she had been raped by one of Hahn's players, Flo Larkai, in April 2003. Larkai was subsequently charged, and his case is scheduled for trial in early December.

The Neal-Cleaves case was fuzzy. The one against Larkai is very fuzzy. Assuming it gets to trial, a jury will sort it out.

Meanwhile, Hahn and Miller have to deal with the word "cover-up," because Miller's former player apparently told police she had been discouraged from reporting the alleged rape to police when she told the coaches about it in June 2003, two months after it allegedly occurred. She brought it to the police's attention at the exact same time as the Cleaves-Neal incident in June 2004.

La Salle was able to put its coaches on the defensive because they did not tell their superiors about a conversation they had in June 2003 with Miller's former player. Both Miller and Hahn have said they did not tell anybody because that was the player's wish at the time. They have both said the player did not claim she was raped when they talked with her, only that there had been an incident of some sort.

Let's just say Larkai gets off or the charges are dropped. Who then says they are sorry to Hahn and Miller? Who says to Larkai, "We are sorry that your life was disrupted?" The answers, sadly, are probably nobody.

It was a different set of circumstances, but these cases remind me somewhat of what happened with Penn State quarterback Rashard Casey in the summer and fall of 2000. He was charged with assaulting a Hoboken, N.J., police officer. Unlike La Salle, Penn State, specifically coach Joe Paterno, said it was going to stand by Casey until the facts were clearer. Casey played that entire season as New Jersey authorities considered the charges.

The moralists called for Paterno to suspend Casey. They wrote that he was just like all of those coaches that valued winning so much that he would look the other way when one of his key players was charged with a crime. When people actually spoke up in defense of Paterno and Casey, some of those same moralizers, who knew nothing about the case, attacked the messengers.

Late in the season, New Jersey authorities dropped all charges against Casey. He got no apologies from the clowns who attacked him without actually talking to anybody close to the case. He did get a nice monetary settlement from Hoboken.

Why can't we just all be in a little bit less of a hurry to judge? Just because it appears to be something does not mean it really is something. We find out the truth with time and facts, two concepts that seem to have gotten lost somewhere in our haste to know everything before it is possible to know anything.

Dick Jerardi has covered national players of the year Lionel Simmons at La Salle (1990) and Jameer Nelson at Saint Joseph's (2004) while listening to the wisdom of Temple coach John Chaney and working in the best big-city college basketball environment in America.

Tark doesn't tell all, but he tells plenty



Adrian Wojnarowski

This was the 1997-98 basketball season and Jerry Tarkanian and I were walking the floor of UNLV's Thomas & Mack Center. Here it was, the eve of the first time he would return to Vegas as a visiting coach, and with all these memories, I said to Tark, all the history here, what comes to mind when you look around here?

So sure, I expected that his answer probably would be the '90 national championship banner, his retired No. 2 college jersey hanging over us or maybe the spot on the court where Larry Johnson hit a shot in a big game. No, no and no. Right away, Tark squinted toward the luxury boxes and spoke longingly about that suite the school let him rent out for thousands in personal profits when the rodeo came to town every year.

"You know how much we made on that thing?" he would say, and you just had to laugh, because Tark always was available to obliterate whatever romantic notions you had about the business of big-time college basketball. Most of his peers would've been thinking the same thing but wouldn't have dared say it.

So with the start of the season, with all the mythology about these sainted molders of men to be forced-fed to you this winter, here comes a necessary dose of reality: Tark has written a memoir on his coaching career, and well, let's just say there are some coaches across America with some explaining to do.

"We never bought a player, but I'm not saying we didn't violate any rules," Tark said.

Never? Even if you don't buy the book, you don't have to buy that, too.

His new memoir isn't a tell-all, but it's as close as a big-time college coach has come since Barry Switzer's "Bootlegger's Boy." Tark told a lot in "Runnin' Rebel: Shark Tales of Extra Benefits, Frank Sinatra and Winning It All," a relentlessly entertaining book written with one of college basketball's best storytellers, Dan Wetzel.

Tark won 778 games in 31 Division I seasons, reaching four Final Fours, winning an NCAA title and influencing the running, pressing style of play as much as any coach of his generation. Most of his career was defined with NCAA investigations, sanctions and court battles that reached as high as the Supreme Court.

If nothing else, Tark was a character in a sport that now spits out its coaches in cookie-cutter form. Tark's an original. And these days, we're running out of them.

Some of the book's stories are hilarious, including Tark sending his Vegas buddy, Frank Sinatra, back to Hudson County to visit with Mike O'Koren and his mother in Jersey City in the mid-'70s. Sinatra spent an evening entertaining the family in the living room, but Tark still lost O'Koren to Dean Smith. A year later, UNLV lost to North Carolina in the 1977 Final Four, 84-83, with O'Koren

scoring 31 points as a freshman.

"Every time he scored," Tark says in the book, "I was ready to curse Sinatra for not closing out that recruiting deal."

From John Wooden to Al McGuire, Larry Brown to Jim Calhoun, Tark has peeled back the curtain on the wild world of big-time college basketball recruiting. And believe me, there are a lot of coaches racing to the bookstores, breathlessly thumbing through the index and praying that they don't find their names.

"I've never, ever turned in another coach who broke rules and beat me for a player," Tark said. "I take pride in that. I've had guys bought from under me, and I've been able to go out, have a beer with them and get over it."

Sure, Tark has selective memory when it comes to the legitimacy of newspaper and NCAA investigations into his programs at Long Beach, UNLV and Fresno State. Still, Tark sold me one thing years ago: The NCAA will always protect the right coaches in the right conferences with the right ADs.

This truth never made Tark innocent, but it sure didn't make him what the governing body wanted you to believe: that Tark the Shark was an isolated renegade in the landscape.

"In major college basketball, nine out of 10 schools break the rules," Tarkanian says in the book's prologue. "The other one is in last place."

There's some truth there. Just a few weeks ago, I was talking to a major-conference assistant coach with ties to the South, just probing him on how exactly the purchase of players worked down there.

When it comes to the South, this one assistant explained, it's something of a pro salary-cap model. As a program, you have so much of

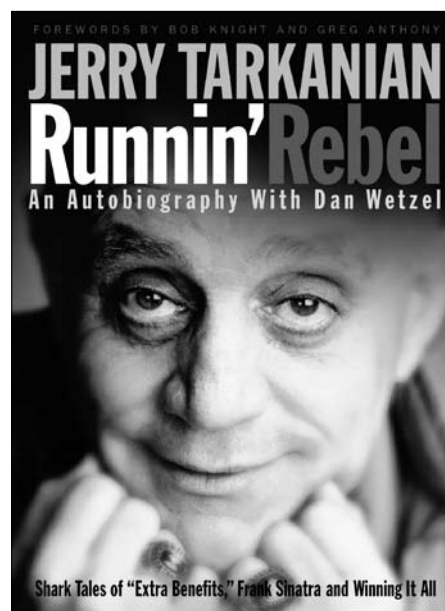
the boosters' money to spend on recruits. In balancing a roster, you have to spread the money around. If another school is willing to go to \$100,000 for a player, do you?

"Be careful you don't spend too much on a center, because you won't have enough left over for the guards," the assistant explained.

For more, check the index of "Runnin' Rebel," for "The Louisiana Purchase," which was Louisiana State's legendary recruitment of John Williams. Tark swears that when the player's mother brought up an asking price, he was so fearful that her boldness had to be a front for an NCAA wiretap, he ran right out of the house.

That's all still happening now, but the code of silence – almost an honor among thieves – makes it hard to cut to the core of the sport. So yes, the last character still standing, Jerry Tarkanian, has done us a favor here. And just the way that he walked into college basketball all those years ago, he's leaving it: guns blazing.

Adrian Wojnarowski's book, "The Miracle of St. Anthony: A Season with Coach Bob Hurley and Basketball's Most Improbable Dynasty," is available in bookstores.





UConn controversies put Calhoun in fightin' mood

Kevin McNamara

STORRS, Conn. — You'd think it would be pretty easy being Jim Calhoun these days. But you'd be wrong.

The Connecticut coach doesn't do anything easily. He lives each day like it's a challenge, like a fight lies around every corner. And in the basketball-crazed state of Connecticut, Calhoun is not paranoid. It seems that whatever the Huskies do, it's news. Whichever way Calhoun leans on a particular issue, there is someone writing or saying his decision was the wrong one.

Here's a typical Jim Calhoun moment. It's mid-October and the recently enshrined Hall of Fame coach has agreed to make a speech at the University of Rhode Island entitled "Coaching Greatness." Before you snicker, he did not pick that title. The organizers of the talk did.

Anyway, Calhoun goes on for about 45 minutes about his time at UConn and the early years at Northeastern, giving the 300 or so people in attendance a glimpse into his life and his wildly successful program. Then he asks for questions. The second inquiry comes from a middle-aged man who stands and asks, "Coach, how is it that you're the second-most popular team on your campus?"

Calhoun smiles and turns away, looking as if he knows someone planted this geek up in the auditorium. But, hey, if this guy wants a fight, Calhoun is ready to roll. He proceeds to rip off one stone cold fact after another, how the men's team generates more money than the women's one does, how the student body lusts after his tickets more than Geno Auriemma's, how TV ratings are higher for his team.

"You know I want to thank you," Calhoun said. "I always like a good argument. I'm gonna leave here in 10 minutes and drive home in an hour and you made my ride home even better."

That's Jim Calhoun's world. His image might forever hang in Springfield, his two national championship banners will always look down on Husky fans at Gampel Pavilion, but Calhoun seems to always be defending his program.

Two hot-button issues arose this fall that made Calhoun especially cranky. A week before the letter-of-intent signing date in October, UConn "stole" point guard Doug Wiggins away from Big East brother St. John's. That's according to many big-city news reports in the East. Forget for a moment that Wiggins, of East Hartford, Conn., always wanted Calhoun to recruit him, always wanted to live any Connecticut resident's dream and play for the Huskies. Last March Wiggins verbally committed to Norm Roberts and said he'd be at St. John's. End of story? Wrong.

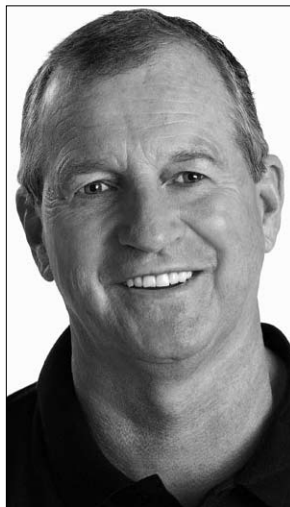
If you listen to Wiggins' high school coach, Anthony Menard, his star kept thinking about UConn as the summer-evaluation period began. He'd wave to members of the Husky coaching staff on the trail and openly wondered if he made the right decision. Then, when UConn tossed aside one of its backcourt recruits, Detroit's Ramar Smith, after he endangered his academic career and left a Connecticut prep school in late September, Wiggins saw an opening. He asked Menard to take him to a practice in Storrs, something Calhoun insists he knew nothing about. Wiggins then expressed his interest in UConn and, a few days later, Wiggins cut the cord with his relationship with St. John's.

Asked if the Husky coaches 'tampered' with a recruit who wasn't signed by St. John's, Menard told the *Hartford*

Courant, "that's completely false. There is no truth to it whatsoever. This is a simple case of a teenage kid changing his mind and making his own decision. UConn was not involved."

Needless to say, L'Affair Wiggins set off a firestorm of controversy in the Big East and amongst the Connecticut press corps. The unethical charges clearly steamed Calhoun, especially since he couldn't address it at the time due to the NCAA's prohibition about discussing recruits before they sign with a school. Once Wiggins did sign, Calhoun simply insisted that "Wiggins called us. He called us. That's the facts."

Interestingly, no one criticized the person who clearly deserved the hot iron. Menard was the adult supervising Wiggins' recruitment. If his star was indeed having second thoughts about St. John's in the summer, he should have called Norm Roberts and



*"I always
like a good
argument."
— UConn's
Jim Calhoun*

told him so. Roberts was said to be "surprised" by the change of heart. If Menard was open and honest here, there shouldn't be any surprises.

But the Wiggins fight is a mere scuffle compared to the biggest challenge, the biggest fight that will await Calhoun everywhere his team plays this season. Once point guard Marcus Williams' suspension for participating in the resale of four stolen laptops at a pawn shop ends in January, he will be the story that follows the Huskies through its Big East schedule and, possibly, all the way to the Final Four in Indianapolis.

After all, some media members might shrug off the Laptop Gate particulars.

But others will note that Williams was charged with four felony larceny counts, received accelerated probation from the state, didn't play basketball for the first semester but was cleared for the Big East portion of the schedule. That'll spark a load of criticism. That's as automatic as a Rudy Gay windmill dunk.

Sounds like plenty of fights await for Jim Calhoun. *Kevin McNamara has been covering the Big East, Atlantic 10 and the Ivy League at the Providence Journal for the last 16 years.*



Steve Carp

Here's a Thanksgiving story that will warm your heart.

How would you like to be accused of being liar, then lose the job you had been working your entire life for? Worse, how would you like to see Mother Nature take away the home you grew up in and with it, all your personal valuables?

Given what he has been through the last couple of years, it's amazing Glynn Cyprien can even smile, much less not be bitter at the world.

"I've got a lot to be thankful for," Cyprien said. "I feel blessed."

Huh?

In 2004, Cyprien finally got his chance to be a Division I head coach. But he lost his job before he ever had a chance to start it. Louisiana-Lafayette fired him a couple of months after he was hired when the school accused him of falsifying his resume.

Then Hurricane Katrina hit New Orleans in late August and wiped out the home where he grew up, seven properties he owned and the houses of four of his brothers.

But somehow, Cyprien is smiling and thankful. Thanks to Reggie Theus, Cyprien is back in college basketball, working as New Mexico State's associate head coach. His family is safe and living with him in Las Cruces, N.M.

"I'm doing great," Cyprien said. "My relationship with Reg made this a very easy transition."

Cyprien was on the outside looking in after he was canned by Louisiana-Lafayette. He has sued the school for wrongful termination, claiming he didn't need a degree from an accredited four-year institution because he was hired as an unclassified employee. He had attended Texas-San Antonio but had not finished the requirements for a degree. He did have a degree from Lacrosse University, which provides classes and degrees on-line.

Cyprien has since gotten his degree from Texas-San Antonio, and his lawsuit is still pending. He couldn't say much about the case, but he believes he will prevail.

Ironically, the Ragin' Cajuns are under investigation by the NCAA, and the athletic director who fired Cyprien was let go himself. For Cyprien, that's a somewhat pleasant irony.

Out of college basketball for the first time in 18



*"I've got a lot
to be thankful
for. I feel
blessed."
N.M. State
assistant
Glynn Cyprien*

continued on next page, column one

Cyprien getting second chances

continued from previous page

and with a family to support, Cyprien had to scrounge up work. He had friends in the NBA, and Gregg Popovich and Larry Brown got him some scouting gigs. Eddie Sutton, his old boss at Oklahoma State, where Cyprien was on the staff of the Cowboys' 2004 Final Four team, also helped him out.

But when Cyprien was still unemployed last spring, Theus immediately brought him on board after the Aggies hired him in late March.

"I wanted to surround myself with people who were experienced and knew how to win," Theus said. "Cyp had worked for Eddie Sutton at Oklahoma State, and he did a great job in Vegas with Billy Bayno. I was fortunate that he was still available."

Cyprien's reputation for being a great recruiter was only part of the reason why Theus, a pretty good recruiter himself, hired him. His ability to relate to young players and teach the game also made him a valuable commodity. Plus, Theus remembered how his old coach at UNLV, Jerry Tarkanian, was willing to help give people a second chance. Cyprien had done nothing wrong, yet nobody would hire him.

"He's got 17, 18 years of experience," Theus said. "That's invaluable when you're trying to build a program."

Cyprien is also trying to rebuild the lives of his family. His parents, James, 67, and Janice, 64, rode out Katrina in their home in the Uptown district of New Orleans. But when the levees gave way the next day and the water was rising dangerously close to overtaking the home, Cyprien's parents got in their van and got out just in time.

His brothers had evacuated, first to Baton Rouge, then to Houston. And when Hurricane Rita hit a few weeks later, everyone reunited in New Mexico.

"We had 25 people living with us at one point," Cyprien said. The family still can't get a straight answer from FEMA or from their insurance company. And with the basketball season under way, Cyprien doesn't have a lot of time to chase down insurance adjusters. But he's glad he's busy with basketball again.

"It's been good I've been able to bury myself in my work," he said. "Reggie's been great to me. He's so understanding."

It only provides extra motivation for Cyprien. He says he doesn't have anything to prove to Louisiana-Lafayette, but he's hoping he can be part of a turnaround at New Mexico State turnaround (the Aggies were a woeful 6-24 last year) and eventually let him fulfill his lifelong ambition of being a Division I head coach.

"Anytime you have success, people are going to look at you," he said. "I believe I'll be a head coach. I've got 18 years experience. You can't take that away from me."

Come Thanksgiving, everyone will converge on Las Cruces. Brothers. Sisters. Aunts. Uncles. Cousins. In all, some 45 people will gather at Cyprien's house, exchange hugs, share a few laughs, probably shed a few tears and be grateful they are alive and well.

He's right. Glynn Cyprien has a lot to be thankful for.

Steve Carp has covered pro and college basketball since 1978 and has covered UNLV basketball since 1988.

Huskies' resurgence just the way they planned it



Bud Withers

In the warmth and sprawl near Palm Springs, Calif., Barbara Hedges lives her retirement quietly. She is far from the shrieking teakettle she knew in her latter days as athletic director at the University of Washington, far from coaches' gambling scandals and a wayward doctor improperly dispensing pills to athletes and a football program that began decaying on her watch.

You wonder what she thinks now.

Not that it would do any good to ask her. She wasn't much with a quote even when she was in office.

But she's not bereft of things to feel good about as she checks the rear-view mirror on her 14 years at Washington. She gets regular reminders in winter that she brought to the UW some sunny days along with the clouds.

Oh, you could argue that Hedges merely fell into those assets, acquiring them by default. You wouldn't be entirely wrong, but allow her a measure of grace, anyway.

The first pleasure is in the numbers, the regular little posting at the bottom of the Washington box score that often says 10,000. It's a reflection of her signature renovation project on the UW campus, ancient Hec Edmundson Pavilion.

Lorenzo Romar, the coach now, played there a quarter-century ago under Marv Harshman. The 1980 team went 18-10, played in the NIT, and still averaged only 3,234 fans a night, which is hard to do at a major school.

"You throw in the UCLA game as a sellout, and Oregon State and Washington State..." Romar said. "To average (3,200), you had to have some low numbers in there."

You did. The old Hec Ed had the inherent charm of an aging basketball building, but it also had the warts of bygone architecture. It was ungainly enough to house an indoor track, so beyond one basket and portable bleachers was a large, drafty void (a description that has too often suited the state of the basketball program as well).

It also had some obstructed seats. You know, posts in front of you.

The place had to go, or at least be updated. So as the century wound down, Hedges went out and headed a fundraising campaign for a remodel that was finished before the 2000-01 season. It took out the track, sealed off that unseemly east end and redid the seats. Left alone, however, were the old, Gothic-style windows, lending a classic feel to a new building.

Now the place hops. It's alive. Washington had 10 sellouts there last year and carried a 22-game home-floor winning streak into the 2005-06 season.

Romar, while appreciative, insists that the building wouldn't have swayed his decision-making back in the spring of 2002.

That was when Hedges went looking for a successor to Bob Bender. First, she targeted Missouri coach Quin Snyder (given the fact she already had Rick Neuheisel on board as football coach, this probably would have meant

a branch office of the NCAA in Seattle).

Hedges tracked Snyder to a weekend break at Sun Valley. Between schusses, Snyder told Hedges no. She went on to the Final Four in Atlanta, where the plot thickened. She had a second conversation with Gonzaga coach Mark Few. It's questionable whether Few was ever offered the job, but he was clearly on the radar.

About this time, Hedges was zeroing in on Minnesota coach Dan Monson. She finally got around to Romar, the guy who probably made the most sense all along, on the Sunday between games in Atlanta.

"How did it go?" Romar was asked that night.

"I don't know," he said blankly, stressing he had no idea what Hedges was thinking.

Now, Romar says, "In my mind, I just figured it wasn't going to happen."

And it wasn't. Monson was offered the job on Monday, accepted it for a time and then, Tuesday morning, was persuaded to reconsider. Early that day, he pulled out. Few had already bailed.

Hedges was left — given the search details, some thought "stuck" — with Romar. But he didn't immediately say yes when she called.

He wasn't one to naturally jump. Just after he took the Pepperdine job, Jim Harrick was forced out at UCLA, and he had the chance to go back where he had been an assistant on the 1995 national title team. But he couldn't find it within himself to betray Pepperdine. He also turned down opportunities at UNLV and Oregon State.

"Aside from my father dying, the hardest things I've ever gone through are the two times I left programs," Romar said. "I cried both times."

He had never considered Washington his dream job. But, rebounding free throws for one of his favorite players at St. Louis that Tuesday, Romar was struck by some sort of vision, and he determined then to make the switch.

"What I realized was, that's where I wanted to be all along," he says. "Maybe subconsciously, I was just putting it out of my mind, not wanting to go through not getting the opportunity."

It's only been a match made in heaven. Washington landed a No. 1 NCAA seed last March. It lost four key players from that team, including first-round pick NBA pick Nate Robinson, but should still make the NCAAAs this year.

Romar now gets the elite players from the ever-burgeoning Seattle talent pool. He just signed 6-foot-11 Spencer Hawes, one of the nation's elite big men.

If you're a fan soaking it up inside new/old Hec Ed, life is good. Even better when you know Romar signed an eight-year contract last spring, and that he hates leaving programs enough to say this: "I refuse to do that ever again."

Bud Withers, who has covered college basketball for three Northwest newspapers since the early 1970s, writes about the sport for the Seattle Times.



Lorenzo Romar



C-USA newcomers feeling no love from Big East holdovers

Rick Bozich

NEW YORK – Once upon a time, Big East football was known as the University of Louisville and the seven dwarfs. Actually, the time was last August. Go back and check your pre-season magazines.

Everywhere you looked, all the media love was funneled to a Cardinal team that had yet to complete its first Big East pass. The *New York Times* predicted Louisville would play Michigan for the national title.

"I heard our football team wasn't too happy about that," said Kevin Pittsnogle, the center on the West Virginia basketball team.

That's what I heard, too. Those predictions seem a bit silly today. Heck, I made a few of them.

Never mind football. Basketball is the venue where the Big East will make fireworks crackle and the ground shake. In basketball, love for the University of Louisville and its four fellow newcomers from Conference USA is tougher to find than a mid-town Manhattan parking place.

"It's fair," Villanova guard Allan Ray said. "They're the new kids on the block. When you're new, you need to come in and earn your respect. That's just life."

"It's like being a freshman player coming into this league," said Syracuse senior Gerry McNamara. "You have to prove what you can do. It's not given to you."

Actually, what was given to U of L, Cincinnati, DePaul, Marquette and South Florida was a hard time, powerful incentive to legitimately play the "no respect" hymn from now until the league reassembles here at Madison Square Garden for the Big East Tournament.

Pre-season predictions are risky business. But if you

can learn one thing from the predictions filed at the Big East media day and in pre-season magazines, it is this:

The five newcomers from C-USA will have to take a number before they are given much love from the 11 Big East holdovers. Big East teams don't care about how many C-USA titles these guys won and they don't care about what they've done in March in the last decade.

In a vote of league coaches, Rick Pitino's U of L team was the only C-USA import picked to finish in the top half of the 16-team reconfigured new league. Unlike the U of L football team, the Cards basketball team was not picked to finish first. They were picked third, behind Villanova and Connecticut.

Voting for the 10-player, all-league team was hardly more encouraging for the newcomers. One holdover C-USA player earned some love – U of L senior guard Taquan Dean. One guy. One.

"We could feel it here that we're kind of the outsiders," Dean said with a smile. "You could just feel it around some of the other players that they felt like we were the new guys. And we had to prove ourselves."

That's an interesting concept – proving yourself. Louisville crashed the NCAA Final Four last season. My memory is not as dependable as it used to be, but I don't remember seeing any Big East teams in St. Louis.

Freedom Hall will be as difficult for UConn as the Gampel Pavilion will be for the Cardinals. I believe Rick Pitino has demonstrated he knows how to coach winning basketball – in several leagues, including the Big East.

"This isn't Conference USA," said Georgetown

forward Brandon Bowman. "This is the best conference in the country. You better bring your 'A' game every night because off nights are not allowed."

He said that like a guy who believed off nights were permissible in C-USA.

What the holdovers whisper is that U of L and its four friends from Conference USA will discover that Big East teams hit harder around the basket than they do on the goal line. They say that if you cannot control the area around the basket, you can't win. They say this will be as fierce as anything these five teams have seen.

Around the basket is where the newcomers have too many mysteries. Louisville is worried about the health of David Padgett (knee), Juan Palacios (ankle) and Brian Johnson (knee). Pitino's team tipped off the season with the first two players on that list unavailable.

Cincinnati is missing the bark of Bob Huggins – and Jason Maxiell. That is a ton of bark. A ton. DePaul is young – and has a new coach. Marquette is younger. Tom Crean brought three freshmen – and senior forward Steve Novak – with him to Manhattan. South Florida is around for its proximity to football recruits.

Hmmm. Maybe these predictions are not so disrespectful. The guys from Villanova, Connecticut and Georgetown sure talked with supreme confidence.

"We know we've got some work to do," Padgett said.

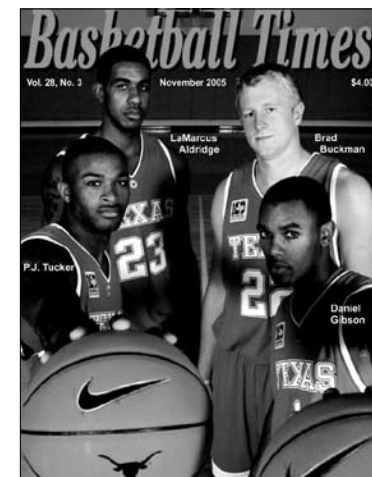
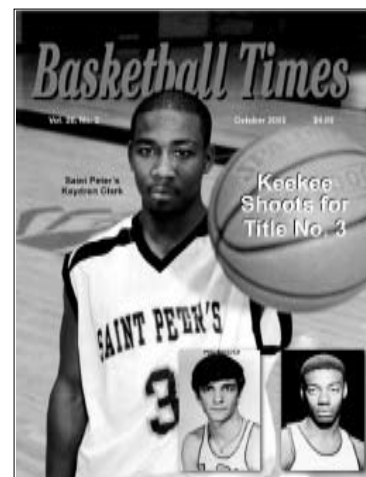
Rick Bozich is a Louisville Courier-Journal columnist who has worked for Louisville newspapers for more than 25 years. He has won 20 US Basketball Writers Association Writing awards.



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College game's own Hall of Fame an idea that's better late than never



Blair Kerkhoff

KANSAS CITY, Mo. – Every project needs a ceremonial launch, and this was the tip-off for the National Collegiate Basketball Hall of Fame in Kansas City. Billy Packer arrived to host the luncheon/pep rally. Mike Krzyzewski was the featured speaker. NCAA and NABC power brokers, area coaches and business leaders were on hand to make official what had been much discussed for more than two years.

"It is our purpose, our hope to immerse every visitor into college basketball," said the NABC's Jim Haney.

The particulars: The 40,000-square foot building will stand next to an under-construction downtown arena, the Sprint Center. The buildings will share a common lobby.

The official name of the place will be College Basketball: The Experience. That's what will be on the literature and road signs. The idea is to promote the interactive aspects of the hall, like creating a free-throw opportunity with the distraction of crowd noise and thunder sticks.

"I would like to recommend that for the next writers' convention, we have it here in Kansas City and every basketball writer goes up and shoots one of those free throws with all of that around him," Krzyzewski said. "And I want to know what percentage was hit, and how many air balls were shot, so you'll have a greater empathy for the people who are doing it."

The NABC, which will oversee the hall, has raised about \$12 million of its \$20 million price tag.

As a Hall of Fame buff who has trekked to Cooperstown, Springfield, Canton and South Bend, I'm thrilled this will be in my city. As a college basketball follower since the early 1970s, I applaud the efforts of those who

made this happen, especially Haney and the NABC. It's not right that there was no place of national honor for college basketball greats who didn't excel enough as pros to be enshrined in the Naismith Hall.

A three-time national player of the year can't make it to Springfield? Ralph Sampson hasn't. How about players with tremendous impact on the college game, such as Christian Laettner and Danny Manning? Kansas City will be their place of honor. Same for coaches like Guy Lewis, Jim Phelan and Gene Keady. This won't be exclusively for major colleges. There should be a place for a Dick Barnett, who led Tennessee State to NAIA championships, and Bevo Francis, the great scorer from Rio Grande.

The college hall also plans to enshrine a team on an annual basis. It could be a championship team or one that played a significant role in the game's development.

Selection criteria are being determined. A 12-member panel will do the choosing, and the selection process will be a difficult task. How to catch up on more than a century? How to deal with the players, coaches and contributors who already are enshrined in the Naismith Hall?

There will be plenty of cross over between members in Springfield and the new hall. You hope the game's luminaries will feel just as honored to be part of this hall.

Where else but Kansas City to make this happen? No, college basketball interest here isn't greater than other places. A college hoop hall would succeed in Kentucky or Indiana or North Carolina.

But no place has Kansas City's history. It's where the game grew up. Old James Naismith himself moved to Lawrence in 1898, became the first basketball coach

at Kansas and spent his final 41 years here. The oldest continuous tournament started in 1937 when the NAIA debuted at Municipal Auditorium.

The first NCAA Tournament, played at Northwestern in 1939, was such a financial disaster that the NCAA considered dropping it. But Kansas coach Phog Allen convinced the NCAA to move the event to Kansas City, where it became a financial success.

Nine national titles were settled at Municipal Auditorium and one at Kemper Arena. No city has played host to more Final Fours or NCAA Tournament games.

This is where John Wooden won the first of his 10 championships, where Bill Russell won his first title and Kansas, with its great center Wilt Chamberlain, lost a triple-overtime game to North Carolina. It's where Manning led the Jayhawks to an improbable title in 1988.

"We always wanted to do something, with basketball's roots so deep in Kansas City," Haney said. "This pretty much has been the heart of it all right here."

The Sprint Center and Hall are scheduled to open in two years. But the Hall of Fame's first class will be announced in 2006. The idea is to identify the top 75-100 figures in history and enshrine them over a period of years. They'll be known as founding classes. After that, the hall will assume a traditional annual voting process.

And "goin' to Kansas City" will have a new meaning in college basketball.

"It's such a good idea," Krzyzewski said. "You wonder why it hasn't happened before now."

Blair Kerkhoff has covered college basketball for the Kansas City Star since 1989.

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ACC's football pitch helps make case for Big East hoops

Al Featherston

DURHAM, N.C. – There's no question that Atlantic Coast Conference football has benefited from the league's recent expansion from nine to 12 teams. All three ACC newcomers have spent the majority of the 2005 season in the national rankings, two of them in the top 10. Television exposure has exploded and football revenues – as predicted by the expansion boosters – are up.

But ACC basketball coaches, about to begin their first season as a 12-team league, are not as certain that expansion has helped the league's signature sport.

"What's the use of complaining about it?" Wake Forest's Skip Prosser said. "What's done is done. We're not going to change anything. We have to make the best of it."

The newly expanded ACC added Boston College a year after Virginia Tech and Miami joined the league. The Eagles are expected to make a major impact – Boston College was picked second (behind Duke) in the media's preseason poll at ACC Operation Basketball.

That's in sharp contrast to a year ago, when the same writers and broadcasters projected Miami and Virginia Tech to finish at the bottom of the league standings. The two newcomers provided surprisingly competitive – Seth Greenberg's Virginia Tech Hokies split 16 ACC games and finished tied with Georgia Tech for fourth in the standings. Frank Haith's Miami Hurricanes won seven league games and tied Maryland and N.C. State for sixth place.

Despite the success of the newcomers, the ACC's first expansion year did not go as smoothly in basketball as it did on the football field. The league's coaches were most upset about the loss of the ACC's traditional home-and-home round-robin schedule.

The ACC played an unbalanced schedule in 1954, its first season, as teams scrambled to fix their schedules to accommodate the new league. But starting in 1955 and continuing through 2004, every ACC schedule except one (in 1967, Duke and former ACC member South Carolina didn't meet due to bad feelings about the Mike Grosso case) was perfectly balanced – every league member played every other league member, home and a away.

The new unbalanced schedule not only spoils the sanctity of the balanced schedule, it's a controversy waiting to happen. The ACC got lucky last season when UNC pulled out its regular season finale against Duke to win the regular season title by a full game. Had the Heels lost that game – and they came within an open J.J. Redick 3-point attempt of doing just that – UNC would have finished in a tie with Wake Forest and fans might have taken a closer look at the league schedules played by both teams.

They would have seen that North Carolina got to play six games against the ACC's three worst teams, while Wake Forest played the same three cellar dwellers just five times. And Duke, which finished third in the standings had just three games against the league's worst three teams, plus an extra game against the other top teams.

One other unfortunate oddity about the ACC's 2005 unbalanced schedule provided just one matchup between the league's two best teams, UNC and Wake Forest. And in an astonishing coincidence, this year's unbalanced schedule provides for just one matchup between the two teams projected to top the standings, Duke and BC.

Surely, the league can do better than that. And surely the ACC can find a way to allow such historic rivals as UNC-Wake Forest and Duke-N.C. State to meet more than once in a season. The matchup between the Blue Devils and Wolfpack has more historic resonance than any ACC rivalry other than Duke-UNC. It's significant that when legendary N.C. State coach Everett Case died, he asked to be buried in a grave overlooking the road to Durham, "so I can wave to the boys on their way to play Duke."

But basketball history obviously means little to the football-mad officials in charge of the ACC.

That was made clear in a promotional commercial sponsored by the ACC during football telecasts this fall. Two actors list the league's historical accomplishments in football. The ACC, they proclaim, has won 10 national championships and produced five Heisman Trophy winners as well as a host of bowl teams and All-Americans.

Unfortunately, that's a curious perversion of the truth.

ACC teams have, in fact, won five football national championships and two Heisman Trophies.

Now, if the commercial had said "the teams that make up the current membership of the ACC have won 10 national titles and produced five Heisman Trophy winners," that would be a fair statement. The three new members who have joined the ACC in the last two years brought five national titles and three Heisman Trophies with them. But for the ACC to claim the five titles and two Heismans that new member Miami won as an independent or as a member of the Big East – as well as Doug Flutie's 1984 Heisman Trophy – opens up issues that the league would do well to avoid.

You see, in trying to polish its football resume, the ACC is in danger of jeopardizing its position in the basketball world.

Historically, the ACC has been able to defend its status as the nation's premier basketball conference by trotting out overwhelming evidence of its accomplishments, especially in postseason play. The league likes to boast of its record winning percentage in NCAA play (67.5 percent), its 10 national titles (only the Pac-10 has more, thanks to UCLA's 12-year run under John Wooden), its record 38 Final Four appearances, its record 61 Elite Eight appearances, its record 91 Sweet 16 teams.

So what's the problem?

Well, when the ACC expanded in the summer of 2002 – stealing Miami and Virginia Tech from the Big East (and adding Boston College a year later), the league bolstered its football position but did little to help its basketball heritage. The ACC action also triggered a Big East reaction – one that didn't do much to help that conference restore its football fortunes, but made it a worthy basketball challenger to the ACC.

Just look at the teams each conference has added:

- The new ACC trio – Miami, Boston College and Virginia Tech – don't bring a lot to the historical table. None of the three has won a national title or even played in the Final Four. Boston College is a respectable 19-16 in NCAA play with seven Sweet 16 appearances. Miami and Virginia Tech are a combined 8-12 in the NCAA Tournament with two Sweet 16 appearances between them.

- The new Big East members include Cincinnati, Louisville, Marquette, DePaul and South Florida. Now, USF doesn't have a lot of basketball credentials, but the other four newcomers are among the most storied basketball programs in NCAA history. Cincinnati and Louisville have each won a pair of national titles. Marquette won one with Al McGuire in 1977 (beating ACC icon Dean Smith in the title game). Ray Meyer made DePaul a national power while ACC godfather Everett Case was still coaching high school ball in Indiana.

Together, the Big East's five newcomers add five national titles and almost 150 NCAA Tournament wins to its resume – using, of course, the ACC's own standard of "conference accomplishments." Significantly, the newcomers now give the Big East the same number of basketball national titles as claimed by the ACC – 10. And if the ACC can lay claim to Doug Flutie and Gino Torretta, the Big East can now boast of George Mikan, Oscar Robertson, Mark Aguirre, Dwyane Wade, Dean Meminger, Wes Unseld and Darrell Griffith.

More significantly, after the expansion dance, Big East appears positioned to translate its newly acquired historical challenge into a modern-day challenge for national dominance. The two leagues have already dueled in the 21st Century, combining to claim the last five national titles (and six of the last seven). Now the Big East – which has matched the ACC's three titles since 1999 – appears to have more weapons at its disposal.

True, Duke and North Carolina remain in the top tier of the college-basketball pecking order, while Maryland is just three seasons removed from a national title. Georgia Tech, Wake Forest, N.C. State and newcomer Boston College have solid programs that have (and will) contend for national honors.

But the new Big East can counter with UConn's juggernaut and such recent powers as Syracuse, Louisville, Villanova and Cincinnati. Certainly, Pittsburgh, Marquette, Georgetown, West Virginia and maybe DePaul are as well positioned as the ACC's second-tier powers.

The big question is whether membership in the ACC will help newcomers such as Miami and Virginia Tech become national players. Conference boosters like to claim that association with the ACC will improve the newcomers over the long term. Of course, that was the argument made when Florida State brought its football prowess to the league in the early 1990s. ACC officials confidently predicted that the Seminoles would blossom as a basketball power as they played and recruited against the hoop powers to their north.

Only it never happened.

Pat Kennedy brought a healthy program into the ACC – one that finished second in the league standings in its first two seasons and reached the NCAA Sweet 16 in both years. But association with the ACC didn't help the 'Noles get better – instead they were buried by their new conference affiliates. FSU hasn't finished out of the ACC second-division since 1993 and has earned just once NCAA Tournament bid in the last 12 seasons.

If the three newcomers face the same dismal future, the ACC might find that when it comes to expansion, its gains in football are balanced by a loss in basketball.

Al Featherston has covered the ACC for 31 seasons.

At Carolina, no returning starters still equates to high expectations



Gary McCann

A few days after practice had begun and before the ACC preseason predictions had come out, Roy Williams was having a conversation with a reporter about the basketball season.

Williams replayed the story on the day ACC coaches met the media at the league's Operation Basketball.

With the Tar Heels losing every starter and seven of their top eight players from last year's NCAA championship team, the reporter told Williams "you guys should be picked ninth or 10th, maybe 11th," in the ACC.

Williams smiled.

"But," Williams said the reporter told him, "you're going to be picked fourth or fifth because it's North Carolina."

Williams didn't disagree.

And the reporter wasn't that far off. In the preseason media poll, the Tar Heels were picked sixth, with Duke a unanimous choice to win the title.

North Carolina's No. 6 pick said a lot more about the Tar Heels program than the runaway selection of Duke to win it all said about the Blue Devils.

And Williams understands that, because he understands Tar Heel basketball.

He understands that low expectations, even middle of the pack expectations, just don't come with the package in Chapel Hill. It's North Carolina basketball, so you should win.

Who cares if your leading returning scorer, David Noel, averaged 3.9 points and didn't start a single one of your 37 games last season and came to the program without a scholarship?

Who cares if your top returning front court player, Reyshawn Terry, was as up and down as a Coney Island roller coaster?

Who cares if your point guard, Quentin Thomas, looked as nervous as a cat at a dog convention when he was on the court?

Who cares if you have only 10 players on the roster and you need four walk-ons just to have a good practice?

Who cares if you may be starting three freshmen and none of them are named Jordan, Worthy, Ford or Perkins?

You're North Carolina, so just win, baby.

It comes with the territory.

"We do have a lot of pride in the uniform," Williams said, "and we hope to make that a positive."

The fact the Tar Heels are picked as low as they are is a product of last spring's mass exodus. Jawad Williams, Jackie Manuel and Melvin Scott graduated. Raymond Felton, Sean May, Rashad McCants and Marvin Williams were first-round picks for the NBA.

Had those last four returned, instead of Duke being a unanimous pick to win the league, it's likely that the Tar Heels would have edged out the Blue Devils in the polls and been a lock to return to the NCAA Tournament and possibly defend their NCAA title.

And what kind of fun would it have been along Tobacco Road this winter?

With all those guys gone, the Tar Heels are something of an afterthought in the ACC. They were picked sixth, but there are some who think the Tar Heels could take a

harder tumble, that ninth or 10th or 11th might really be the most realistic finishing point.

The only thing Roy Williams knows for sure is that he doesn't know what to expect.

Because there are four freshmen to work into the mix and none of the holdovers other than Noel played that much, practices have gone in slow motion.

"Last year," he said, "I could call (play) B-23, and everyone would know what to do. I call B-23 this year, and I've got eight guys looking at me wondering, 'What the crap is he talking about?'"

This doesn't mean the Tar Heels are without talent. Noel might turn out to be a decent player. Terry showed flashes of good, sometimes exceptional, play last season. Thomas at least came in with good credentials.

Then there are the highly regarded freshmen – swingman Marcus Ginyard, combo guard Bobby Frasor, swingman Danny Green and 6-foot-9 Tyler Hansbrough.

They're all blue-chippers.

Hansbrough, who already has acquired the nickname "Psycho-T" from his teammates because of his all-out, slightly reckless style, was voted preseason ACC rookie of the year.

Williams says Hansbrough thinks he can get every rebound. Noel said Hansbrough breathes so hard in practice at times they're worried about him passing out. Noel said the 6-5 Ginyard, who cracked a bone in his hand, "has been great playing with one hand."

With that in mind, there's another way to look at this season. Maybe the Tar Heels are baby blue snakes, lying in the grass waiting to take a bite out of some folks.

As one league coach put it, there's nothing more dangerous than a North Carolina team believing it is an underdog.

"Yep, yep," Noel said, when asked if that's how he looked at this team.

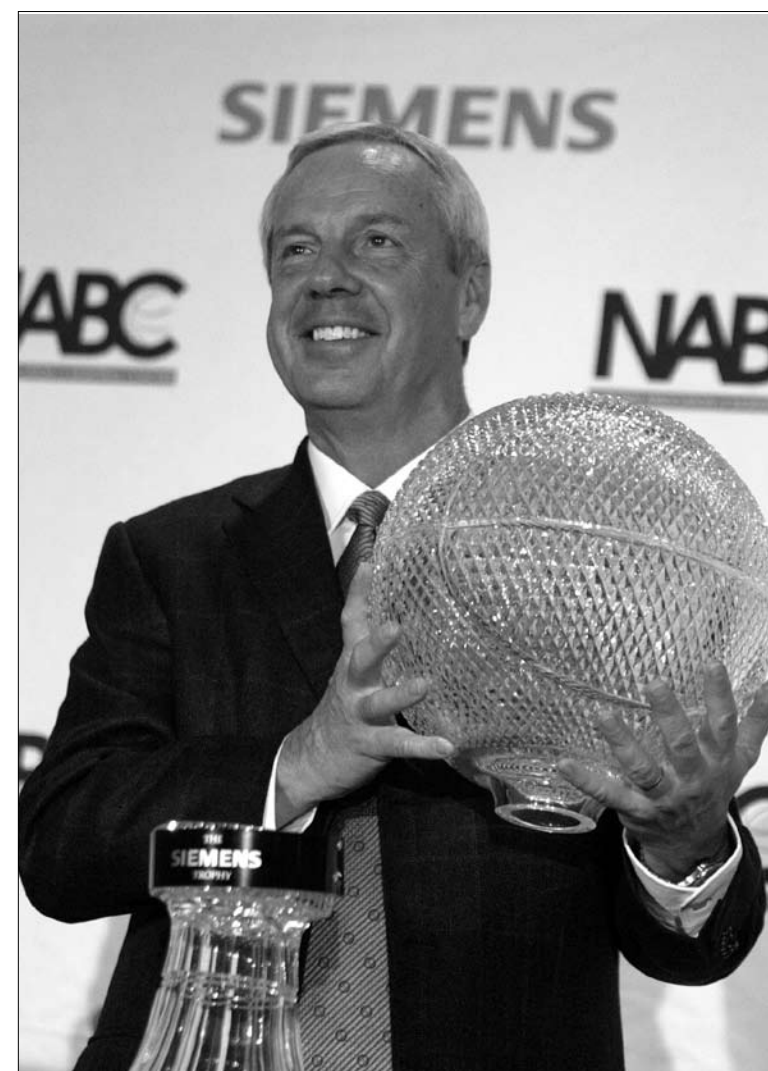
"On paper, there are people who think this team has no chance to defend a national championship."

Does Noel like that?

"Yep," he said. "People think North Carolina has the name, but they don't have the players. Some teams might go to sleep on us."

The Tar Heels appear a year away from being back in the national title picture. Williams has signed a six-player recruiting class rated best in the nation, one some are calling the best since Michigan's Fab Five.

Brandan Wright, a 6-foot-9 power forward; Wayne Ellington, a 6-4 shooting guard; Tywon Lawson, a 6-foot point guard; and Alex Stepheson, a 6-9 power forward are rated among the top 25 recruits. Wright, Ellington and Lawson are top 10.



After winning a national title, Roy Williams faces unreasonable expectations.

Also coming in are 6-6 swingman William Graves and 6-8 forward Deon Thompson.

It's a class that has a lot of everything.

So, it appears if the Tar Heels are going to take a licking, it had best be this season.

Williams admits that he might even do a little coaching from the perspective of the downtrodden underdog, too.

"We'll find out," he said, smiling. "I've never seen that name on a jersey win a game yet, but there's no doubt that at times I'm going to say something about people overlooking us or the under-appreciation that people have for us, but you still have to be able to do it."

He warned that approach only goes so far, though.

"Sometimes I'm just better than you are," he said. "I can be as motivated as I want to be and 100 percent into it, but still the bottom line is James Worthy's gonna whip you. You've got no hope. You can stay up all night. James Worthy's still gonna beat your butt."

How many backsides this North Carolina team will take to the woodshed, no one knows.

But because it's North Carolina, folks expect plenty.

Even this season.

Gary McCann has covered college basketball for more than 30 years, most of it in ACC country but including stints in the Big Ten and SEC.



SMU, top-notch backcourt, entering into unknown in C-USA

Steve Richardson

SMU enters uncharted and possibly choppy waters. Besides facing different schools in a new league – Conference USA – the Mustangs open the season with an untested front line, a first-year point guard and its star, senior guard Bryan Hopkins, in street clothes.

SMU only broke even (14-14) in coach Jimmy Tubbs' first season, when the team played in the Western Athletic Conference. And that was accomplished with Hopkins and three key seniors, who have since departed.

Hopkins will miss the first seven games of this season because he is academically ineligible. He considered turning professional after and entering his name into the 2005 NBA draft. Tubbs said Hopkins never got an agent, but he didn't go to class regularly during the second semester of last season, either.

So when NBA scouts indicated Hopkins wouldn't go in the first round, he decided to come back to school.

"I think for like any young kid, (the NBA is) a dream," Tubbs said. "He alluded to that, and he made a bad decision in terms of his class work. A lot of kids do. It doesn't cost him everything, but it cost him seven games."

Hopkins, the Mustangs' leading scorer (17.9 ppg) and assist man (9.7), won't become eligible until the beginning of second semester, Dec. 19 against Savannah State.

"It's a two-fold deal," Tubbs said. "But it is a positive. The first seven games Bryan doesn't play. I think it gives our other players a chance to get out there and show what they can do. And that's going to be beneficial. On the other hand, Bryan comes back, I know he will make us a better basketball team."

Eventually when he returns, Hopkins will be freed up to play shooting guard and focus more on offense.

Kansas State transfer Dez Willingham, a true point guard from nearby DeSoto High School, will be the Mustangs' main playmaker. Willingham attended Mountain View (Texas) Community College in 2004-05 but did not play basketball, so he has three seasons of eligibility remaining with the Mustangs.

A 5-foot-11, 180-pound sophomore, Willingham is coming back from a shoulder injury two seasons ago at Kansas State. So far, he has been the Mustangs' assist leader in games, and that figures to continue all season.

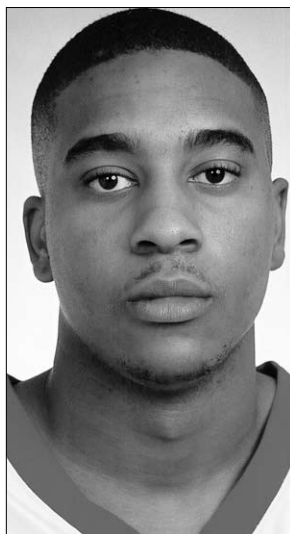
"I think the one thing that Dez brings to the table is stability," Tubbs said. "I think he is a natural point guard. He will bring us leadership when the clock is ticking down, tie ball game. I think the ball will be in his hands, and nine times out of 10, he will make the right decision."

"I wasn't too surprised he came back, I think his parents love to see him play ... It is more convenient for them to make that 30-minute drive to SMU."

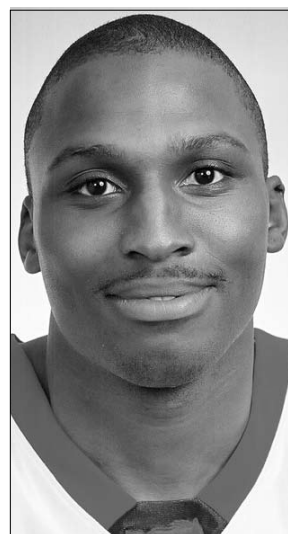
Willingham, like some other Texas high school players, initially believed college basketball was more glamorous outside the state.

He believed Kansas State was an upcoming program. And he liked the idea of getting to play right away for the Wildcats. Despite the distance, his family could watch him play on television. He liked the coaching staff. And he said "night in and night out, you really had to bring you're 'A' game."

Playing in the Big 12 had its advantages, but in the end, Kansas State was too far from Dallas.



Dez Willingham



Bryan Hopkins

"It was a confidence boost for me, because I played against some of the best teams in the country," Willingham said. "I played against Aaron Miles (Kansas), Curtis Stinson (Iowa State) and you could go on."

"They didn't want me to leave. It was more of a decision for me and my family. I left on good terms. I wanted to be close to my family."

Willingham also visited TCU and North Texas when he decided to leave Kansas State. But SMU was the best fit for him. Tubbs coached Willingham's father, Kenneth, at Dallas Kimball High school, a couple of decades ago.

And Willingham and Hopkins were high school basketball stars during the same era in the Dallas area.

"B-Hop and I have been playing on the same team together since we were 8," Willingham said. "I have known

him for awhile. Of course, getting to play with him in the same backcourt was an attraction for me."

Hopkins, from Dallas Lincoln, really has had to be a scorer and a playmaker much of his career at SMU. And that has, at times, put an extra strain on his play.

"Bryan is a point guard with a scorer's mentality," Tubbs said. "And that is a good thing. But at the same time, you need stability to your basketball team. And I think that is what Dez brings. I think they will play very well together. I think they will benefit from each other. I think those two kids will make a great backcourt."

Tubbs still has to come up with some semblance of a frontline, where there is very little experience returning.

Bamba Fall, a 7-1, 200-pound freshman from the Senegal, and 6-11, 245-pound junior Donatas Rackauskas of Lithuania are both projects. Fall needs to gain weight, and Rackauskas also is overcoming a knee injury that forced him to redshirt. Devon Pearson, a 6-6 junior, is SMU's most experienced front-line player.

But even if Tubbs settles on a front court, figure the guards, Hopkins, Willingham and 6-4 sophomore Derrick Roberts, to provide most of the offense. That's fine with Willingham, who with Hopkins could form one of Conference USA's best backcourts.

"We have known each other for a while, and we know each other's game," Willingham said. "I like to penetrate. I like to get my teammates involved and play defense. I am going to do anything I have to do to help the team win. I think we will be able to play off each other."

Steve Richardson, who also serves as executive director of the Football Writers Association of America, has covered college sports for the Kansas City Star and the Dallas Morning News.

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Center Court

Returning to the University of Illinois for his senior season wasn't Dee Brown's first choice, but it was his only choice after breaking his right foot at the NBA draft camp. After some down time – and we do mean “down” time – the smiling face of college basketball is the Fighting Illini's ambassador again.

What can Brown do for U?

By John Akers

CHAMPAIGN, ILL. – The orange-peel smile is back on the face of college basketball.

There was a verified sighting of this way back during an Illinois-Quincy exhibition game in early November. Dee Brown made one 3-pointer from a distance closer to 30 feet than 20, and then another. Then a two-handed pass, whipped from over his head, found an open teammate under the basket, and Brown was giggling, and looking, like a bearded 10-year-old – braids swaying, headband pulled to his eyes and socks pulled to his knees.

Luther Head wasn't there for a high-five. Deron Williams wasn't around for a hug. No NBA scouts were there to take note of the moment.

There was just a smiling coach Bruce Weber and a bunch of mostly unfamiliar Illinois players. And Dee Brown, perhaps college basketball's most recognizable player, bouncing around, appreciating the game as always. Maybe, somehow, more than ever.

Dee Brown followed the time of his life, an NCAA championship game appearance, by going about 14 weeks, nearly an entire summer, without basketball.

“A hundred days without basketball,” he says, “is tough.”

Brown was on the mend, physically and mentally. Everyone knows that his right foot was broken during his first game of the NBA draft camp last June in hometown Chicago, forcing Brown's return to the Fighting Illini. Few were privy to the rest of it – the disappointment of being denied the opportunity to prove himself as an NBA-caliber point guard; his separation from NBA-bound buddies Head and Williams; the sheer pain of recovering from a broken foot; the jolt of going cold turkey without basketball.

Those were images that Brown preferred to keep private. There would be few sightings of a well-deserved moment or two of self-pity to sully the public persona that continues to border on a love affair with the state of Illinois.

“Everybody loved him as soon as he arrived on campus,” says center James Augustine, the Illini's only other senior. “During his freshman season, he was even

bigger than Brian Cook (then a senior and the Big Ten player of the year).

“Even when we go grocery shopping, he's always willing to talk to people. Some days you're in a bad mood, but Dee always puts that aside.”

Brown remembers what it was like when a star athlete visited his school – and how rarely those moments occurred – so he will spend a fourth season making up for the neglect of others by thrilling kids at nearby schools and hospitals four or five times a week. He is the kind of visitor who would ask students who, other than himself, was their favorite Illinois player. Luther Head? Brown would punch up Head's number and hand the cell phone to some star-struck third-grade girl, suddenly at a loss for words. The trips are as much a part of Brown's routine, he said, as going to practice. Attempts by the coaching staff to curtail the activities – for Brown's sake – meant only that the coaches learned of fewer of his visits.

Brown completed most of the class work needed for his degree this summer and fall, and his only “class” this semester is an internship with the sports-information department. But his schedule remains as hectic as before, if not more so.

His cell phone rings. The call is coming from a campus day-care center where Brown plays with pre-school children every Thursday. He will be there, he promises, in about five minutes.

“I'm one of the busiest dudes ever,” he tells the caller, apologetically.

Even if he weren't, he would likely still be among the nation's most popular players. Fans outside Duke seem to love to hate J.J. Redick, with the smirk and the right wrist seemingly extended in permanent follow-through. And there's Shelden Williams, maybe. But outside of them, name another college player that the majority of college fans would recognize in public.

Dee Brown is one of the few.

Brown understood his regional popularity, but he slowly seems to be grasping his broader appeal. He was surprised when he was recognized while visiting his



As a point guard, Dee Brown must distribute and create.

mother in a park in Amherst, Ill., this summer, but Cathy Brown-Blocker wasn't. His jersey was sold out at every vendor's booth, she said, at the Final Four in St. Louis.

"The players made fun of me, because I would call him the poster child of Illinois basketball," Weber says. "But as the year went on, he kind of became the poster child for college basketball."

Certainly, his all-out nature has something to do with that. Just as certainly, his ensemble plays a part. The braids. The headband. The orange mouthpiece. The knee-high socks. Few others should leave the house dressed this way, but it works for Dee Brown.

Even his name works better than his given Daniel Brown. A previous Dee Brown pumped up his shoes, covered his eyes and won the NBA dunk contest in 1991. Another poor soul is no longer even the most popular Dee Brown in University of Illinois history, though he wrote *Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee* while a professor at the school. Yes, Daniel Brown has made quite a name for himself as the latest, possibly greatest Dee Brown.

"Somewhere along the line, he had to think of all this stuff," Weber says. "He's a very good marketer of himself, and I don't mean that negatively. Some people do that conceitedly. He's got an ego and all that, but he does it in almost a good way. He loves to be the center of attention, but again, I don't think he does it negatively."

Kids across Illinois now wear the headbands and knee-high socks, mimicking a look that Brown says is functional rather than crafted carefully.

"That's just me," Brown says. "For the first three years, my high school coach wouldn't let me wear a headband. My senior year, I got a new coach and started wearing a headband. It's just something I do. I don't like sweat running down in my eyes."

"As for my teethguard, I got my mouth hit several times and got my teeth knocked back. I love my teeth. I want to take care of my teeth. I pull my socks up because I take a shower before the game and put a little lotion on my legs. My legs would just look ashy, so I cover my legs up. It's not designed to make people think I look cool playing basketball."

The most recent Dee Brown Trend even led the Illinois High School Association to come up with the Dee Brown Rule. This season, "jersey popping," the act of celebrating a play by pulling out the front of one's jersey, could lead to a technical against an Illinois high school player.

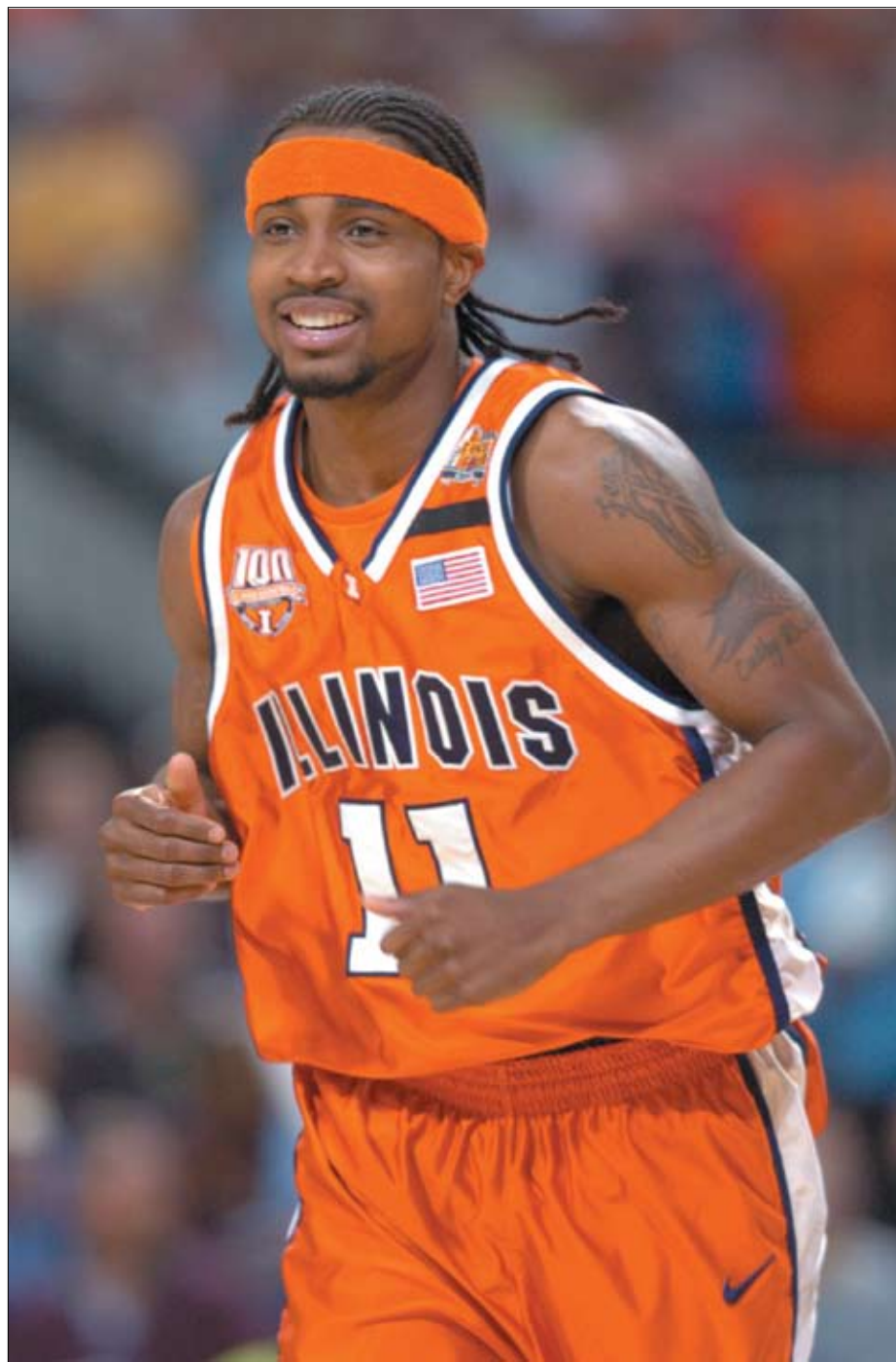
Brown pleads guilty to starting the trend, though not to it becoming an unsportsmanlike act. The idea came to him during the heat of a comeback at Purdue, where the Illini trailed for the first time at halftime, 39-33. After hitting three consecutive 3-pointers at the end of a 23-6 run, Brown faced the 2,000-some Illini fans among the crowd of 14,123, put his thumbs inside his jersey and pulled out the "Illinois" logo for all to see.

"I had never done that before in my life," Brown says. "The place had gotten quiet, but you could hear the Orange up here. At the time, you're showing so much emotion, you turn around and say, 'This is who I play for. This is us.' It was all about my school."

"It became a big thing, but it was never meant to be on posters or anything. It was just for my crowd to understand

that we recognize you and this is who we play for. It would be unsportsmanlike conduct if you did it to the opposing bench. Or if you do it to a player, in his face. I wasn't even looking at their bench or at a player. I was looking straight into the air, right at the crowd. You can call it taunting. You can call it unsportsmanlike conduct. But all the people in my family, all the Illini fans, when I did it, they felt it. They just saw the 'Illinois.'"

Brown, too, had difficulty looking beyond the Illinois. Which is why the prospect of leaving for the NBA would become so difficult.



The braids and headband are part of an ensemble that works well for Dee Brown.

You know all about the regular season. The Fighting Illini won all but their championship game against North Carolina, winning over hearts with the sort of unselfish play that reminded old-timers of Red Holzman's New York Knicks. They not only threw the extra pass, they often threw two or three extra passes. An incredible 15-pass sequence against Northwestern – ending in a 3-pointer by Brown, the ball never hitting the floor – summed up the season.

The college game loved Brown, who made the magazine covers and was named *The Sporting News'* national player of the year and the Big Ten's MVP despite averaging only 13.3 ppg. The NBA loved Williams, the No. 3 pick of the draft. Head was everyone's compromise

choice, both a college All-American and a first-round NBA pick.

What we don't know – what we'll never know – is if the NBA would have been ready to draft Dee Brown, too. He went back and forth on whether to apply, weighing the pull that Illinois had on him against a time when his stock might never be higher.

"I'm in my state," says Brown, whose mother moved from inner Chicago so that he could play at Proviso East in Maywood, Ill. "And that's something that kids need to realize. When the big school in-state is recruiting you, look at them. If you do well, the people in your state will love you."

"If I didn't love Illinois, truly love Illinois and what they've done for me, all the things they've allowed me to do here, I could have just felt like it was my time. I could have been way selfish about it. I think a lot of players would have taken the selfish approach. But I never took an agent, never looked into taking an agent, until the time came when God pointed me in the direction to go back or to go."

There, too, was the matter of Brown returning to point guard, a position he had not played exclusively since he was a freshman. There was no question that Brown could run an NBA fastbreak. He isn't "The One-Man Fastbreak" for nothing. But could Brown get an NBA team into its halfcourt offense? Would he have the instincts to properly run the pick and roll? He was strong enough and fast enough, but at 6-foot wearing shoes, was he big enough to play in the NBA? Teams would need to know.

The blunt-spoken Weber, who owns a doctorate from the Gene Keady School of Coaching, played devil's advocate, posing these and other questions. He brought up 6-footers Chris Thomas, who tested the NBA draft after his sophomore season at Notre Dame, and Jason Gardner, who did the same at Arizona. Both returned to college but were never again perceived in quite the same way.

"All I wanted him to do was think it out," says Weber, who helped Brown with the NBA application process. "Did I support him? I think I did, but maybe not in the way he wanted me to."

Apparently not. Prior to the NBA camp, Brown told reporters that he didn't think Weber was supportive of his NBA dream. The two had butted heads before, but that was primarily during the 2003-04 season, when Weber often was found guilty of not being Bill Self, whose departure

for Kansas had left many of the Illini players feeling abandoned.

"Sometimes, I'm too honest," Weber says. "Sometimes I'm not as tactful as I probably should be. My dad was pretty hard on me, but he told me what I was good at, what I wasn't good at and what I needed to work on. Sometimes you can schmooze a little bit, but if you want to go pro – boom, boom, boom – these are the things you need to work on."

But Weber, too, had much to do with giving Brown his chance, helping him make "astronomical strides" by improving his left hand and his shooting percentage, which rose from a combined 42.2 percent as a freshman and

sophomore to 49.9 percent as a junior. The rest, in June, was up to Brown.

Brown was just minutes into his NBA audition when he turned a steal against Florida's Anthony Roberson into a layup.

"He pushed it right back on me, and I turned and ran," Brown recalls. "He stopped when he saw me cutting him off, and I stopped. And my foot just rolled. He scored, and I took the ball back out, but I couldn't walk any more.

"I just thought it was a bad sprain. I'd sprained my ankle plenty of times."

Brown remained positive right up until he heard the doctor tell him he had broken the fifth metatarsal of his right foot. Ten days later, Brown announced that he would return to Illinois.

"He's very smart," says Brown's mother. "He knows that six or seven months is not a long time."

The first two, spent in a funk, probably felt more like a year.

Doctors placed Brown's foot in a cast, rather than a boot, because while recovering from a stress fracture during the previous summer, the coaches had learned that Brown continued to play while wearing the boot. Brown was conservatively given about 14 weeks to recover, about twice the typical rehab period. He was on pain-killers and had to use crutches and be carted around to classes. Though he acknowledges that his separation from Head and Williams was unavoidable, that, too, hurt.

"There were a lot of days when I really didn't smile or joke, because you're miserable," Brown says. "I didn't want people to see me down. I've been through days when you couldn't even take a shower by yourself. You had to sit down in a chair. You're basically helpless. You have to have someone help you with everything.

"It changed me a lot. Without basketball, you're just a regular guy now. It was 100 days without nothing. I didn't even touch a basketball during those 100 days. It makes you realize that basketball is a privilege. Ever since I became who I am, I've always taken a humble approach toward life, because I knew that anything can happen. But this made me even more humble. This is life. Basketball can be taken from you. So now what are you going to do? You have to find happiness without it."

Weber says he left Brown alone to sulk for a few weeks, then began urging him to make appearances in the gym even if he couldn't participate. Augustine says that while he could tell Brown was down, he did a good job of hiding his emotions from his many young, new teammates. Brown says he finally began to snap out of it on Aug. 17, his 21st birthday.

"I started realizing," Brown said, "that it was time to get back."

The face of college basketball is frowning.

He loves playing for Weber, he had just said, and the comment required for a follow-up, given Brown's summer comments.

"There was never any negativity, like me not wanting to play for him," Brown says. "Basically, it was more like



Aside from James Augustine (left) and Dee Brown (right), a mostly new group of Illini will be huddling this season.

me saying that me and coach are tight, so I feel like this should have gone on and that should have gone on. It was never me saying I didn't like him or didn't like playing for him.

"People got it confused. They didn't look into the facts or what's really going on."

Indeed, the two seem on the surface to get along fine. Weber says their relationship is better than ever, which is what it needs to be, with Brown becoming the fulltime point guard again.

"I've got to be a mini-coach Weber," Brown says.

"I've got to try to do everything right and be on the same page with him. I've got to understand what he wants. I'm not completely on the same page with him yet. I still have some things to learn. I think it will only get better."

Technically, this shouldn't be a huge transition, since Brown often played the point the past two seasons whether or not Williams was on the floor. Brown averaged 4.6 assists and had a 13 assists against Longwood and 11 against Penn State despite technically playing at off guard last season. But Brown will be a different type of point guard than Williams, however. Weber will need the Big Ten defensive player of the year to be a point man when applying defensive pressure. He will need him to initiate the offense. Unlike Williams, Weber will also need him to come off screens and shoot 3-pointers.

Weber worries about asking Brown to do too much, but not about him trying to impress NBA scouts. In fact, it might not be such a bad thing if he did. If Brown plays like an NBA point guard, Weber figures he will be doing his job for the Illini, too.

Brown also needs to drag fellow guard Rich McBride and freshmen Jamar Smith and Chester Frazier with him to Illinois' shiny practice facility with him late at night, the way he used to go there with Head and Williams. Augustine, like Brown, should

be solid. The Illini figure to give Weber choices between athleticism (non-shooters McBride and Brian Randle) or shooting skill (the slightly built Smith and Frazier) on the wing, but maybe only Brown can give him a combination of both. Unless, of course, the younger players develop along the way.

"We have the horses," says Illinois assistant coach Wayne McClain, "but I think he's the jockey."

Indeed, Dee Brown can help himself by helping them, if his young teammates can convert his passes into assists and, ultimately, victories.

It won't be the same, because it never is. Brown's career is proof of that. There's nothing linear about his four seasons in Champaign-Urbana, beginning with his freshman season with Self,

the tug-and-pull transition to Weber as a sophomore and that magical junior season. And now Dee Brown returns for his senior season, bringing his rehabilitated foot to a remodeled team.

Where will it lead? No one knows for sure. But one need only look for clues to the orange-peel smile that's back again on the face of college basketball.



Dee Brown's return gives Bruce Weber something to smile about.

Missouri Valley Conference Basketball Update

Greg McDermott Has Built a Successful Program at UNI



DAVE REYNOLDS -- Peoria (Ill.) Journal Star

For its first dozen years after joining the Missouri Valley Conference in 1991, Northern Iowa basketball mostly struggled. The Panthers compiled an overall .417 winning percentage, never finished higher than fourth and earned no postseason tournament bids.

Greg McDermott's first two seasons as the school's head coach, 2001-02 and 2002-03, continued the mediocrity as far as won-loss record. But it was clear to most observers that McDermott, who played for the Panthers in the 1980s, was building a program that would eventually need to be reckoned with in the league.

Two NCAA Tournaments later and now, for the first time, picked as the MVC preseason favorite, UNI basketball has arrived. The fact that a new 7,000-seat arena is being built and will open next season is a result of that success.

The turning point came near the end of that second season in which UNI finished 11-17. It was the first year of the Bracket Buster event



Greg McDermott, UNI

and the young Panthers drew a tough road assignment at Louisiana Tech.

"It had been a tough year for us, but we decided to approach the trip like a postseason trip," McDermott said. "We were going somewhere far away from home against a team we didn't have much prep time for just like you do in the postseason.

"We went down there and won that game and it gave us some confidence that we could go beat a good team on the road. It helped get things started for us. The first step to building a program is to get your guys to believe they can win at home. The second step is to get them to believe they can win on the road."

He had them believing in a big way by the next season. The Panthers won five regular-season road games as well as home victories over three top 25 ranked opponents en route

to capturing the MVC Tournament title, earning just the second NCAA Tournament bid in school history. They then almost pulled off a monumental upset against eventual NCAA runners-up Georgia Tech, before falling in the final moments 65-60, finishing 21-10.

The Panthers followed with a near carbon-copy season last year, going 21-11 and earning an NCAA at-large bid. They lost another close first-round game, losing another close one, this time to Wisconsin 57-52.

Last season's berth marked an historic one for the league as well. Since the Panthers joined the league, the Valley has vaulted from the 21st-rated conference that annually got just its tournament championship into the NAAs to a three-bid league twice in the last six years.

"Maybe the most significant development in terms of respect and national perception of the Valley was having Northern Iowa get in last year as an at-large," said MVC commissioner Doug Elgin. "It's amazing to think we had a fourth-seeded team lose in the quarterfinals of our tournament and still get into the NCAA as an at-large. That speaks volumes for our league."

It also speaks volumes for the UNI program. "Our program is ahead of where we thought it would be at this point," McDermott said. "I don't think anybody could have expected playing in two NCAA Tournaments and then being picked first in the league in our first four years. I couldn't be more pleased with where we are today."

You know there's a 'but' coming.

"But the thing we haven't done yet is win the regular-season title," he said. "We're a long way from being mentioned in the same breath as Creighton and Southern Illinois."

Creighton has won at least 20 games seven consecutive years and has captured the MVC Tournament championship five times in the last seven seasons. Southern Illinois has won the regular-season title four years in a row and has earned an unprecedented four straight NCAA Tournament at-large bids.

The Panthers' best player, senior guard Ben Jacobson, started a trend at UNI when he committed to the program during his junior year of high school. It's been a formula that has worked wonders for getting the program on its feet. Three other current Panthers fol-



Erik Crawford, UNI

lowed suit as did all of the signed recruits for next year.

"It's risky because you commit to young people who aren't finished products," McDermott said. "But it's something that's worked for us. We take kids before some other schools can get to them. We've done it through our camps."

Now that the program has moved to the top of the Valley with a new arena on the way, Northern Iowa is equipped to go head-to-head with the big boys, whether on the recruiting trail or the basketball court.

Valley Views:

- The Valley has named its Player of the Year awards for two of its most famous alums - Larry Bird of Indiana State and Jackie Stiles of Missouri State. Bird was the national college Player of the Year in leading the Sycamores to the NCAA championship game in 1979. Stiles is the all-time leading scorer in Division I women's history and led the Bears to a Final Four appearance in 2001.

- Wichita State is celebrating its 100th anniversary of men's basketball this season. The Valley's 100th anniversary celebration will come during the 2006-07 season.

- For the first time since 1987-88, there are no new coaches in the league this year.

- There has been a format change for this year's MVC Tournament, culminating in the championship game being aired on CBS Sports on Sunday, March 5.

CBS SPORTS

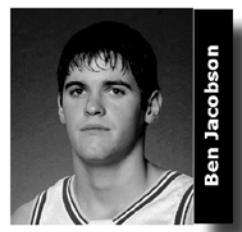
The tournament will begin one day earlier with first-round games on Thursday, March 2 followed by the quarterfinals March 3 and the semifinals March 4. "Having our tournament on CBS is a tremendous step for Missouri Valley Conference basketball and is testimony to our caliber of play," Elgin said.

- Set to be inducted in March into the ninth MVC Hall of Fame class include Bradley's second all-time leading scorer Mitchell "J.J." Anderson, Drake women's basketball coach Carole Baumgarten and Duane Klueh, a former basketball and tennis player for Indiana State who later coached the Sycamores in both sports. Baumgarten will be inducted as an Institutional Great and Klueh enters in the Lifetime Achievement category. The Valley's Hall of Fame began in 1997 and has honored 44 individuals during its nine years of inductions.

2004-05 MVC Preseason All-Conference Team

Name, School, Pos., Ht., Wt., Year, Hometown (High School)

Nate Funk, Creighton, G, 6-3, 205, Sr., Sioux City (Iowa) Heelan High
 Ben Jacobson, UNI, G, 6-3, 205, Sr., Sioux City (Iowa) East High
 David Moss, Indiana State, G, 6-5, 195, Sr., Chicago (Ill.) Thornwood High
 Marcellus Sommerville, Bradley, F, 6-7, 225, Sr., Peoria (Ill.) Central High
 Jamaal Tatum, Southern Illinois, G, 6-2, 175, Jr., Jefferson City (Mo.) Helias High
Preseason Player of the Year -- Ben Jacobson, UNI



Fat jokes and media-guide fibs no longer apply for LSU's Davis

Lee Feinswog

BATON ROUGE – LSU admitted that it flat-out lied last season about the weight of forward Glen Davis, who, we were told, tipped the scales at about 310 pounds. As it turned out, 330 was more like it.

“That makes me a liar, too? Kinda sorta,” Davis admitted. “Sometimes you don’t want certain things to get out and you shy away from the truth a little bit.

“But now we don’t have to lie.”

That’s because the 6-foot-9 sophomore, last season’s Southeastern Conference freshman of the year, weighs in this season between 306 and 312, depending on the day.

Honest. And it wasn’t easy.

“Organic food is not pretty. Hot cereal is not a pretty sight in the morning,” Davis said, shaking his head with a laugh “

“I call it boot camp when I start losing weight. I felt like I was on ‘Fear Factor’ every morning.”

Davis, whose nickname is “Big Baby,” stopped to imitate himself spooning drool from a bowl and forcing it down.

“It was tough. It was tough,” Davis repeated for emphasis. “But hopefully it pays off because that was hard work.”

His coach and teammates say Davis is better than ever..

“You can see it in his movement and the way he can sustain high levels of play,” said ninth-year LSU coach John Brady. “And he can practice harder and longer.”

Brady is hoping that Davis continues the LSU trend of his stars making a huge improvement from their freshmen to sophomore seasons, including current NBA players and former Tigers Stromile Swift (Rocket), Ronald Dupree (Timberwolves) and Brandon Bass (Hornets).

“We think he’s going to take that same path,” Brady said.

Davis is a hometown hero, having led University High, located on the LSU campus, to back-to-back state Class 2A titles. Last season, he averaged 13.5 points, 8.8 rebounds (second in the Southeastern Conference) and 1.4 blocks per game for the Tigers, who won the SEC Western Division.

He accomplished that at 330 pounds by playing with a fervor rarely seen from a college player. Loose ball on the floor? Look out below. Rebound up for grabs? Get out of the way.

“It’s a hunger, wanting the ball. I need the ball. It’s like I O.D. like an addict,” Davis said. “I really do O.D., especially when the ball’s on the rim. I get mad if the ball bounces the other way. I get upset. When I’m around the ball, I just gotta have it.”

His teammates see that in practice.

“Best big man in the country,” said LSU redshirt-freshman Tyrus Thomas, who has played with Davis all his life. “You’re not going to find one who can move like him with the body that he has. He can shoot the outside shot, do it in the lane. Best big man in the country.”

Garrett Temple is a redshirt freshman who played with Davis’ at U-High. The LSU guard is also the son of Collis Temple II, LSU’s first African-American player (1971-74), and brother of Collis II, who played at LSU from 1999-2003.

“Glen can sing a little bit,” Garrett said. “He’s

a character. He loves the spotlight, and he just makes everyone around him feel so good.”

Davis was a member of the USA Basketball U21 team that competed in the world championships last August in Argentina.

One of the assistant coaches was Georgia’s Dennis Felton.

“I never thought of Glen being fat or overweight,” Felton said. “He’s just a very big man. I’ve always marveled at how well Glen carried his weight. He was always mobile and agile and could do things a man his size shouldn’t be able to do. But trimming down is certainly going to help him continue his progress in becoming a better player. He has a big heart and big, larger-than-life personality.”

Davis was an outstanding tailback in high school before giving up the sport his senior year. He toyed with the idea of entering the NBA draft coming out of high school but wisely reconsidered.

He admitted that he learned a lot last season as LSU finished 20-10 after losing in the first round of the NCAA Tournament.

“I worked hard this summer and I grew mentally,” Davis said. “Physically my body changed into a better player.”

He credited his experience with the U21 team that included other young big man such as Nick Fazekas of Nevada, Taj Gray of Oklahoma and Terrence Roberts of Syracuse.

“It was great being around those guys and playing with those elite basketball players,” Davis said. “It really helped my confidence.”

Seriously, at 330, Davis never looked fat.

But there were those inevitable comparisons to Charles Barkley.

“Charles Barkley is like 6-4, and I don’t have his athleticism,” Davis said. “He was a phenomenal jumper. I don’t jump that high. I jump when I want to.

“It’s just a skill that I have to get a shot off and get to the ball.”



He’s lighter now, but few knew that LSU’s Glen Davis played last season at 330 pounds.

The aforementioned Collis Temple II is a proud mentor and former coach.

“He’s really, really highly skilled,” Temple said. “He’s been a phenom since I started coaching him when he was 10. He’s special.”

He’s been a great quote since anyone can remember. He got great laughs at SEC Media Days this past October when he declared that the best part of losing weight was “My abs. I took off my shirt, and I saw my abs for the first time. It feels good. The hardest thing to give up was chocolate-chip cookies. We were very close.”

Brady, of course, is more concerned with Davis on the court.

“Glen Davis could be the MVP of the league this year,” Brady said. “And every MVP of the SEC plays in the NBA. He’s close. He’s right there.”

Latest setback for Cal's Powe nothing compared to life's challenges

Jeff Faraudo

Coach Lorenzo Romar understands that a healthy Leon Powe cannot be a good thing for his University of Washington team or the rest of the Pacific 10 Conference. But Romar nonetheless will be happy to see the California sophomore back on the court this season.

"He's as good a player as there is in the country," Romar said. "He's not only a good player, he's an inspirational player. He's one of those players his teammates feed off."

"We thought he and Ike Diogu were the most difficult players to play against in our league," Romar said, referring also to the former Arizona State star, now playing for the Golden State Warriors. "Powe does it with sheer determination, and that's not to take anything away from his talent."

"He has that combination of talent and determination."

Powe's determination faces one more hurdle. In the hours before Cal's Nov. 14 exhibition game vs. Humboldt State, Powe was pulled from the lineup when an MRI test showed a problem in his right foot. Two days later, further tests confirmed he had a minor stress fracture in his right mid-foot and would be on the shelf for at least two weeks.

Powe was put in a walking boot and the situation was to be reassessed in late November.

"While this is obviously a temporary setback for Leon, he has handled it well and we are confident he will return to action relatively soon," coach Ben Braun said. "Leon knows he has a lot of basketball ahead of him this season."

By the time Powe returns, it will have been about 21 months since his most recent game with the Bears. The 6-foot-8, 245-pound forward, a McDonald's All-America at Oakland Tech High in 2003, sat out last season after undergoing a pair of surgeries to repair a torn anterior cruciate ligament in his left knee.

The year before, Powe merely averaged 15.1 points and 9.5 rebounds, become the first freshman to lead the Pac-10 in rebounding. He named conference freshman of the year and voted to the 10-man all-league team.

And yes, he did it while somewhat handicapped. "That was a little glimpse," Powe said. "That was hardly even me. I was playing on a torn ACL, and I didn't even know it."

Powe initially injured the same knee following his junior season in high school, had full reconstructive surgery, then returned to play his senior season. Without knowing it, he tore the ACL again during a summer-league game before entering Cal, and he played the season expecting he might just need a minor arthroscopic procedure at year's end.

Instead, he underwent a two-part procedure, followed by months of rehab. Powe's recovery was so successful he entered this season without the need of the bulky brace he wore on his knee much of his freshman year. During a five-game summer tour of Italy with the Golden Bears, Powe averaged 23.6 points and 10.4 rebounds.

"His positive attitude and willingness to work is something you don't see every day," said Mike Blasquez, Cal's strength and conditioning coach. "His approach made the difference for him."



Leon Powe has risen above many of life's obstacles.

Braun is hardly surprised.

"Leon's amazing. He's defied a lot of the odds," Braun said. "He's got a solid core. I've never heard Leon make excuses. When he's had a bad break in his life, he's turned it into a positive."

To be sure, Powe has encountered plenty of obstacles.

"Actually, my whole life has been astonishing to me," he said. "The knee injury don't compare to the stuff that happened to me in my real life. I look back on some of that stuff ... man, sometimes I think I shouldn't even be here."

His father left home for good when Leon was 2 years old and younger brother Tim was a newborn. Powe's mother, Connie Landry, worked hard to support the family, but couldn't outrun poverty and its insidious sidekicks.

"I've seen a lot of different things," Powe said.

He estimates that he lived in 20 places – apartments, shelters, residential hotels – during his childhood, following his mother as she did her best to keep the family afloat.

She didn't always make the right choice: A couple of scrapes with the law in the name of trying to help her family, and a succession of five more babies, Powe's half-siblings.

Powe is grateful that his mother always found a way to put food on the table, to give her children some kind of Thanksgiving dinner, and have something under the Christmas tree to open.

"I thought I understood before, but I really understand now what she had to go through, and it wasn't easy," Powe said.

In 2002, four days before Powe and Tech played for the California state title, Landry died at age 40 from factors

related to a chronic heart condition. Still, Leon says she didn't leave him empty-handed.

"She had that will to survive," he said. "I think that's what I have in me."

"He's a fighter," Braun confirmed.

That quality was put to the test as Powe battled back from his most recent knee injury.

"There were times I wanted to give up," Powe said. "What kept me motivated was God and my mother. My mother ... didn't create no quitters. If something's planned in the future for me – something big – I might as well stick it out and just wait and see."

Now, Powe can almost see that something big in his future. He entered the fall term carrying a 2.6 grade-point average at Cal, and on pace to graduate. He also looks forward to a career in the NBA, although no one has to remind him how fragile dreams can be.

As a youngster, there seemed to be no happy endings on the horizon. Powe missed classes in grade school because he had to stay home and take care of Tim – now a freshman at Cal State East Bay. Leon's best friend became involved with drugs and did jail time. His own grades at the outset of high school were so poor that he was ineligible for a portion of his freshman basketball season.

"I'm surprised I was able to fight off all the little demons and all the stuff I had to deal with," he said. "For a while, I didn't know what a college was."

Powe acknowledges he could not have found success without help along the way. Bernard Ward, who had conquered his own troubled past to earn a college degree, became Powe's surrogate father and helped him envision a path to the future. Jonas Zuckerman, a teacher, was invaluable as a tutor and academic motivator.

The lessons Powe learned include one that also applies on the basketball court: You cannot succeed alone.

"Sometimes things aren't meant for you to go through it by yourself," Powe said. "At first I was thinking, 'You handle it on your own. Be a man.' No, you need help. I got support from everybody. It's a good feeling."

"Toughness is when you can ask for that."

Powe believes there is enough of a supporting cast at Cal for the Bears to make a push to the NCAA Tournament.

"He wants to win. It's really important to him," Braun said. "He wants to prove not that he's a good player – he's already done that. He wants to prove he can help his team win."

Powe said there will be no hesitation in his game when he finally returns to the court.

"I can only play the game one way – rough and ruthless. That's my pace," he said. "I can't fear anything."

Braun expects Powe to be a much more well-rounded player this season, a better passer, a better perimeter shooter, a better leader. Powe has talked about averaging 12 or 14 rebounds per game.

"The people around here who know me, they're not going to be surprised," Powe said recently. "But the casual fans ... they know I'm good, but they don't know how good."

"I know how good I am. I know how good I can be."

Rare syndrome offers no roadmap for Sutton's return to Tennessee Tech

John Akers

Mike Sutton had thoroughly answered most of the questions about being stricken by the rare Guillain-Barre' (ghee-yan bah-ray) Syndrome in an email, but he had one more thing to say and no other way to relay it other than by telephone.

Communication is not the problem that it once was for the Tennessee Tech coach, who spent part of last summer paralyzed, hooked to a ventilator and unable to convey a simple yes or no but for the blinking of his eyes. Sutton, 49, has been off the ventilator since late July, rides in a wheelchair and is regaining movement in his fingers, though he does not yet have the use of his hands.

Yet, that meant that his wife, Karen, had to type his email responses, and she had deliberately left out an important detail.

"The typist doesn't follow all of my directions," Sutton said. "I just wanted to make sure that you understood that from the onset, she's been there every day. At times, she's been my eyes and ears, and she still is my hands, in some respects. It's a big deal for me, sometimes, when I can move a finger.

"I certainly could not have gotten through this without her."

Karen Sutton did relate in frightening detail her husband's account of a seven-month ordeal that might prevent him from coaching this season, though not necessarily limit him in future seasons. Roughly 85 percent of those stricken by GBS – in which the immune system attacks the peripheral nervous system – recover to nearly full capacity, though a spokesperson for the GBS Foundation said many continue to battle fatigue, numbness or muscle pain. Shuffling feet is a common trait of a GBS survivor, the spokesperson said. The mysterious Guillain-Barre' also struck Andy Griffith, the actor, and Joseph Heller, author of *Catch-22*, for no apparent reason, and there are some who believe that GBS, rather than polio, sent President Franklin D. Roosevelt into a wheelchair. The syndrome (it isn't considered a disease, because no apparent disease-causing agent is involved) doesn't discriminate by age, gender or race. Recovery comes with no apparent timetable, taking weeks or maybe years.

GBS often begins with a virus. Such was the case for Sutton at about the time of the Final Four. He left that week to attend the Portsmouth (Va.) Invitational Tournament draft camp with Willie Jenkins, the former Tech star who will play professionally in Turkey. Sutton wrote that the cold got much worse and that he continued to "feel lousy" in Portsmouth. He canceled plans to fly on Sunday, April 10, see his new granddaughter, Riley, in Tampa, fearing that his infection might spread.

"It really didn't matter what I had planned," Sutton wrote. "GBS had other plans for me."

Sutton went to dinner in Norfolk, Va., that Saturday evening with Dr. Richard Rosenblum, a close family friend who was monitoring the situation. The next morning, Sutton was still experiencing some pain.

"As I left the hotel and entered the parking garage, my legs gave way and I fell on top of my suitcase," Sutton wrote. "I was able to somehow drive to Dr. Rosenblum's house. He wasn't at home, but I called him on his cell phone, and he asked his brother to get me to the emergency room at DePaul Medical Center, where he met me."

Little more than seven years ago, Sutton was celebrating a national championship as Tubby Smith's assistant with the 1998 Kentucky Wildcats. The two were together at five different spots – beginning at Hoke County High School in Raeford, N.C. – and now Tubby's son, Saul, is coaching on Sutton's staff at Tennessee Tech. Sutton has this program on the rise, with four starters returning from last season's Ohio Valley Conference champions. The Golden Eagles were 20-12 the season before that.

But, as Sutton said, it didn't really matter what he was planning for his team. GBS had other plans for him.

Sutton would spend the next 30 weeks in a hospital bed, 14 of them in Nashville and most of the rest in Cookeville, Tenn. Sutton was allowed to return to his Cookeville home on Nov. 18 and will continue aggressive outpatient therapy for what Sutton said "may be many months."

He was listed in critical condition, placed on a ventilator and given a tracheostomy during those harrowing first few days.

"It was a scary time," Sutton wrote. "My wife was trying to get a flight out of Tampa to Norfolk to be with me. I guess I was pretty well sedated and didn't remember much except when Karen arrived that Monday afternoon. I asked her if I was going to die.

"I could not move anything. There were tubes everywhere, and doctors in and out of my room. Even when I wasn't so heavily medicated, I still had no means to communicate. We were reduced to me blinking my eyes to respond to questions or making requests. That lasted several weeks. Karen said she read accounts of others with GBS who said it was like being buried alive. I could hear and see everything going on around me, but I was powerless to interact, either verbally or physically."

Steve Payne, Sutton's associate head coach, took over the program's day-to-day operations, insisting all the while that the role was only temporary. Sutton, on a ventilator for 15 weeks, was able to communicate with his staff by phone by early May.

"I could listen to their questions or updates on what they were doing," Sutton wrote, "but my wife would have to respond for me."

Later, players were allowed to visit.

"Communication was difficult at best," Sutton wrote. "There was a fatigue factor due to the respiratory involvement and still the frustration of not knowing how long this would go on ... I was able to, for very short time periods, use a speaking valve to talk."

These days, Sutton attends a practice each week, "even though I am not on the floor with them as much as I would like." He watches film of practice daily and offers critiques to the players via phone or email. Recruiting visits to Tennessee Tech have even included side trips to the Cookeville Rehabilitation Center.

"That's a little different, but we want to be honest and up front, and I want them to hear from me what to expect from my program," Sutton said. "It's the same thing my



There's no timetable for Mike Sutton's return to Tennessee Tech's sideline.

assistants are going to hear, but I think it's important that the parent hear it from me."

Sutton was wheeled onto the field during halftime of a football game and believes he will be strong enough to attend home basketball games, though probably not in any coaching capacity.

"Until I can be the voice that the kids hear, they need a clear, consistent voice," Sutton said. "And that needs to be Steve's until such a time that I can almost take over the reins."

Payne has been with Sutton since he took the job four years ago. Dexter Williams arrived a year later, and Saul Smith was hired last season. Russ Willemsen was hired as director of basketball operations last June.

"Of utmost importance is that it be understood that my staff, under coach Payne, has done a phenomenal job of carrying on in my absence," wrote Sutton, who also praised Tennessee Tech president Robert Bell and athletic director Mark Wilson for their patience and understanding.

Milone Clark, a returning guard, said the Golden Eagles are preparing for the season the same as they would under Sutton, but though Payne, stopping short of commenting on the emotional effect of losing their coach for the season.

"I learned from Tubby Smith that the most important part of any program is the players and their well-being," Sutton wrote. "Young people are very resilient, and I'm especially proud of how they are handling my situation. We have really good kids who work hard.

"There are many unknowns during my recovery time, so I think it is very important to have as much normalcy and continuity as possible. We use the acronym for TTU, which, for us, means Togetherness, Toughness and Unselfishness. Our players have exhibited these characteristics extremely well during this entire process."

Sutton is prepared for a long recovery. He must remain in a wheelchair, he wrote, for the foreseeable future. He will continue to need assistance, which, Karen Sutton was willing to write, "his wife will continue to lovingly provide."



2005-2006 MAAC BASKETBALL MONTHLY REPORT

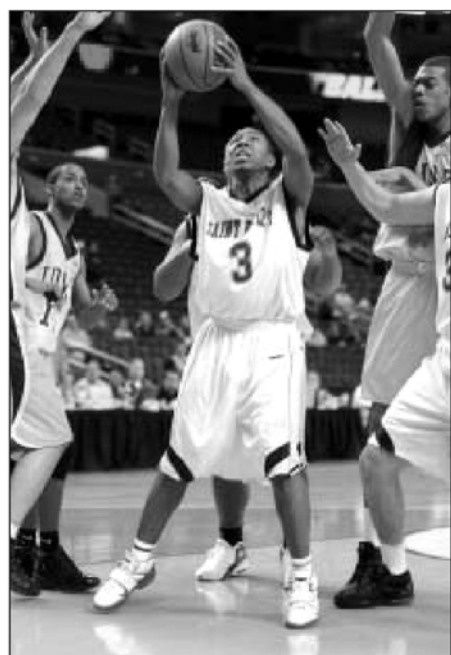
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SAINT PETER'S KEYDREN CLARK NAMED PRESEASON PLAYER OF THE YEAR

Saint Peter's senior guard Keydren Clark has been named the 2005-06 Metro Atlantic Athletic Conference Preseason Player of the Year, as chosen by the MAAC's 10 head coaches.

Clark, who earned this honor last season, is joined on the first team by Canisius College senior guard Kevin Downey, Fairfield University senior guard Terrence Todd, Iona College senior guard Steve Burt and Manhattan College sophomore guard/forward CJ Anderson.



Clark, a two-time member of the All-MAAC First Team, earned his second consecutive national scoring title last season, averaging 25.8 points per game for the Peacocks. He also garnered his third straight MAAC Long Distance Shooter Award after netting 108 three-point field goals during his junior campaign.

Downey, a Second Team All-MAAC choice last season, averaged a team-high 16.5 points per game last season while pulling down 5.6 boards a night for the Golden Griffins. He also recorded 106 assists over 29 games during the 2004-05 season.

Todd, also a 2004-05 Second Team All-MAAC selection, led the Stags last season with his 15.9 points and 2.8 assists per game.

Burt, also a member of the 2004-05 All-MAAC Second Team, averaged 19.3 points per contest for the Gaels. Additionally, he finished fifth in the MAAC regular season in made three-point field goals with 71 during his junior campaign.

Anderson, a member of the 2004-05 MAAC All-Rookie Team, averaged 16.1 points, while shooting 52.4 percent from the field. He is the league's top returning rebounder, as he grabbed 8.6 caroms a night for the Jaspers.

The preseason second and third teams are listed above.

2005-2006 Preseason All-MAAC Teams				
First Team				
Kevin Downey, Canisius	Sr.	G	6-3	Livonia, N.Y.
Terrence Todd, Fairfield	Sr.	G	6-0	Neptune, N.J.
Steve Burt, Iona	Sr.	G	6-0	New York, N.Y.
CJ Anderson, Manhattan	So.	G/F	6-6	Cincinnati, Ohio
Keydren Clark, Saint Peter's	Sr.	G	5-9	New York, NY
Second Team				
Ricky Soliver, Iona	Sr.	G	6-3	New York, N.Y.
Jared Jordan, Marist	Jr.	G	6-0	Hartford, Conn.
Will Whittington, Marist	Jr.	G/F	6-3	Kingwood, Texas
James Mathis, Niagara	Sr.	F	6-6	Newark, N.J.
Jason Thompson, Rider	So.	F	6-9	Mt. Laurel, N.J.
Third Team				
Darnell Wilson, Canisius	Jr.	F	6-6	Wayne, Mich.
DeWitt Maxwell, Fairfield	Sr.	F	6-5	Newark, N.J.
Arturo Dubois, Manhattan	So.	F/C	6-8	Harlem, N.Y.
Lorenzo Miles, Niagara	Jr.	G	6-0	Washington, D.C.
Edwin Muniz, Rider	Sr.	F	6-7	Passaic, N.J.
2005-2006 MAAC Preseason Player of the Year: Keydren Clark, Saint Peter's				

IONA IS THE TEAM TO BEAT IN THE MAAC FOR THE 2005-06 SEASON

2005-2006 MAAC Preseason Coaches' Poll	
1. Iona (5)	94
2. Manhattan (4)	93
3. Canisius (1)	74
4. Marist	56
5. Rider	55
6. Fairfield	49
7. Niagara	45
8. Saint Peter's	43
9. Loyola	30
10. Siena	10

Iona College, which has earned seven MAAC regular season titles and six championship crowns, has been picked as the team to beat for the 2005-06 season, according to the MAAC Preseason Coaches' Poll.

Head coach Jeff Ruland, who is embarking on his eighth season at his alma mater, has a trio of senior guards to lead the way for the Gaels this season: Steve Burt, Ricky Soliver and Marvin McCullough.

Manhattan College finished one point behind Iona in the poll to take the second-place slot. Led by head coach Bobby Gonzalez, the Jaspers return four starters from last year's squad, including CJ Anderson, the 2004-05 MAAC Rookie of the Year. Senior guard Jason Wingate, sophomore forward/center Arturo Dubois and sophomore guard Jeff Xavier should also help in Manhattan's MAAC title hopes.

Canisius College is also expected to make a run for the MAAC crown this year. Ninth-year head coach Mike MacDonald welcomes back several veteran performers, most notably senior guard Kevin Downey and junior forward Darnell Wilson.

Marist College, under second-year head coach Matt Brady, looks to be in contention for the MAAC crown this season. Standouts Jared Jordan, Will Whittington and Ryan Stilphen give the Red Foxes plenty of hope for a banner year.

Rider University rounds out the top five, with interim head coach Tommy Dempsey leading the charge. Junior forward Edwin Muniz, junior guard Terrence Mouton and sophomore forward Jason Thompson will work to have the Broncs finish even higher at the end of the 2005-06 season.

Fairfield University, Niagara University, Saint Peter's College, Loyola College and Siena College make up picks six through 10, all capable of unseating any one of the top five teams as they vie for the MAAC regular season title this season.



METRO ATLANTIC ATHLETIC CONFERENCE

CANISIUS — FAIRFIELD — IONA — LOYOLA — MANHATTAN — MARIST — NIAGARA — RIDER — SAINT PETER'S — SIENA



2006 NCAA DIVISION I WOMEN'S BASKETBALL CHAMPIONSHIP
FIRST AND SECOND ROUNDS
March 19-21, 2006
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Home-court advantage? It's greater than most realize

Jim Sukup

The RPI Report

CARMEL, IND. – Last season, there was quite a bit of talk about the fact that the NCAA added a weighting to the RPI that considers game locations. What we're talking about here is home-court advantage, and this is the perfect time of year to be discussing this important subject. Few conference games are played during the month of December, and most of those are confined to the period after the Christmas break. Non-conference games are the rule of the land in December, and we often see teams beating up on much weaker opposition by inviting these sacrificial lambs into their home arenas for a holiday feast.

Home-court winning percentages in Division I hoops has remained virtually unchanged for the last 30-plus years. That number stands at 66.4 percent, give or take a tenth of a percentage point. Sounds simple? Not so fast!

There are four types of home court winning percentage to consider when taking a closer look at the subject. They are: 1) overall home-court winning percentage; 2) non-conference home-court winning percentage; 3) conference games only home-court winning percentage; and 4) non-Division I home-court winning percentage (games that do not count in the RPI). We could add conference tournament games home-court winning percentage, but only a few games fall into this category during a confined period of time near the end of the regular season.

The all-games home court winning percentage includes only games against Division I opponents and does not count games against non-Division I teams. Here are those numbers for the last six seasons, with only games between Division I opponents included.

All Games	Home Court	Winning Percentage
Year	Wins-Losses	Pct.
2000	2705-1358	.6658
2001	2731-1338	.6712
2002	2760-1375	.6675
2003	2849-1389	.6723
2004	2778-1414	.6627
2005	2881-1406	.6720

By any measure, these figures remain amazingly consistent. For the five years detailed above, the marker is at 66.8 percent, but for the past three decades these data have remained at the 66.4 percent level. There's no reason to expect them to vary substantially in the future.

Next we will consider the non-conference home court winning percentage. Again we find that these numbers are simply very consistent from one year to the next, with the figure being a bit above 74 percent. Here is the list since the 2002 season, again indicating only games between Division I opponents.

Non-conference Games Only Home Court Winning Percentage	Year	Wins-Losses	Pct.
2002	1088-366	.7483	
2003	1151-387	.7484	
2004	1086-385	.7383	
2005	1150-389	.7472	

The only surprise is that the percentages are again very consistent. When teams are able to pick and choose their home games, it is only reasonable to expect that the winning percentage of the home team in non-conference contests would be much higher than the overall home-court winning percentages.

Next up is the conference games only home-court winning percentage. Guess what? When teams have to play

opponents of approximately the same caliber and they do not get to pick and choose when and where the games are played, the winning percentage goes down considerably compared to the overall and non-conference home-court winning percentage! The conference games only home-court winning percentage checks in at about the 62.5 percent level. Again, is this any surprise? Of course not! These data allow us to see an emerging picture of home-court winning percentage on the national scene that is probably a bit different than you might expect.

Year	Wins-Losses	Pct.
2000	1592-962	.6233
2001	1628-950	.6315
2002	1640-997	.6219
2003	1631-978	.6251
2004	1654-1014	.6199
2005	1690-999	.6285

One question that might come to mind is how teams that play conference tournament games at home fare in the overall home games winning percentage picture. Those records were 36-15 (.706) in 2004 and 41-18 (.695) in 2005. Home teams generally have a big advantage in such games because they almost always host lower seeded teams that had worse records in conference play.

What pulls the subject of home-court advantage all together is found in the data shown in the table below. This table shows the percentage of all regular-season home non-conference games on a conference-by-conference basis. The data in this table are a real eye-opener for many, even to those who follow college hoops very closely.

Non-Conference Home Game Data, 2004-05 Season, Sorted by percentage of all non-conference games played at home (Games vs. Division I opponents only)

Conference	W-L	%	Games @Home	%
Big East	83-14	.856	136	.713
Big 12	84-7	.923	132	.689
Atlantic Coast	77-6	.928	132	.629
Big Ten	72-13	.847	137	.620
Western Athletic	40-19	.678	96	.615
Southeastern	77-13	.856	147	.612
Conference USA	77-17	.819	166	.566
Mountain West	45-11	.804	101	.554
Missouri Valley	49-7	.875	101	.554
Pacific 10	50-5	.909	103	.534
Atlantic 10	39-29	.574	133	.511
West Coast	39-7	.848	107	.430
Sun Belt	38-13	.745	122	.418
Horizon	21-14	.600	84	.417
Colonial Athletic	30-10	.750	97	.412
Patriot	18-19	.486	95	.389
Mid-American	38-5	.884	113	.381
Metro Atlantic	19-15	.559	91	.374
Big Sky	19-14	.576	91	.363
Big West	22-11	.667	92	.359
Ivy League	22-13	.629	104	.337
Southern	23-9	.719	103	.311
America East	21-5	.808	87	.299
Northeast	13-15	.464	97	.289
Big South	13-11	.542	86	.279
Mid-Continent	17-8	.680	92	.272
Southland	16-4	.800	86	.233
Southwestern	9-10	.474	82	.232
Atlantic Sun	11-4	.733	69	.217
Ohio Valley	11-10	.524	102	.206
Mid-Eastern	11-4	.733	106	.142

This table is sorted by the percentage of regular-season non-conference games played at home and *not* by the non-conference home-court winning percentage. For example, Big East teams played 71.3 percent of their non-conference games (97) at home, leaving 28.7 percent (39) of their remaining games for neutral and road contests. At the other end of the list, MEAC teams played only 15 home games, leaving them to play 85.8 percent of their D-I games on the road or at neutral sites.

If there is one theme to this list, it is that only 11 out of the 31 conferences collectively play more than half of their non-conference games at home. That leaves 20 conferences to play most of their non-conference schedule on the road or at neutral venues. Understandably, every conference was above .500 against non-conference Division I home-court opponents, with the range being from 92 percent for the Big 12 to 52 percent for Ohio Valley.

Although the MEAC did not play any non-Division I games, is it any wonder that teams from the bottom conferences play a substantial number of home games against non-Division I teams? Otherwise, they would play almost no non-conference home games because they simply cannot get D-I teams to play them at their place. Over the last 14 years, Division I teams have won 92.3 percent of the games they played against non-Division I opponents, almost all of which are home games for the D-I team.

The NCAA announced that it will begin a planned focus and promotional buildup to the beginning of the 2006 season. This is the best news that we have heard concerning the beginning of the season in a long time.

Not long ago, the season began the day after Thanksgiving, with only a very few exceptions. Quick – which teams participated in this season's first Division I game? If you knew that it was St. Francis (Pa.) vs. Cornell in the 2K Sports College Hoops Classic in Syracuse, give yourself a pat on the back. What date was that game played? An answer of Nov. 8 will put a feather in your cap. Last season, there were 354 Division I games played *before* Thanksgiving, and this season there were over 110 *tournament* games played before Thanksgiving.

College basketball has one main problem with playing games in November, and that is football. Hoops games played early in the season, while exhilarating for the fanatic, are not very important in the long haul. Meanwhile, many of the most important football games are played in November and very early December.

Now that the NCAA controls the recently renamed NIT Season Tip-Off, it figures to be the cornerstone of the buildup to the season. It is unlikely that there will be many, if any, games played before it kicks off the season. Tournaments that have been around for a while, such as the Maui Invitational and the Great Alaska Shootout, will probably be played in their traditional slots, but many of the others clog up the fan's focus, which must change if college basketball is to promote such a start to the season. Here's one vote for keeping the number of tournaments before Thanksgiving to a minimum and to making the start of the regular season the day after Thanksgiving.

Jim Sukup is editor of Collegiate Basketball News and has published The RPI Report since 1991, The Women's RPI Report since 1997, and maintains rpiratings.com.

Horizon League

Aspiring to teach young people, through athletic competition, the value of learning, service to others and personal responsibility.

League looks forward to promising women's hoops season

Eight teams ready to challenge Phoenix for the Horizon League regular-season title

UW-Green Bay begins its pursuit of a fifth consecutive Horizon League women's basketball championship, with eight other teams chasing the Phoenix for a trip to the NCAA Tournament. UWGB won 21 of its final 23 games last season to compile a 27-4 overall record, including a 15-1 mark in League play. The 27 victories mark the sixth season in a row with 20 or more victories and helped give UWGB its seventh consecutive Horizon League regular-season title. Junior forward Nicole Soulis leads the Phoenix into action this winter as the League's Preseason Player of the Year. The six-foot-two Soulis averaged 12.4 points and 4.0 rebounds in fewer than 20 minutes per game a year ago, finishing 11th on the final League scoring charts while shooting 51 percent from the field.

Wright State's 19-11 overall record represented the Raiders' best finish since the school moved to Division I in 1987. Brittney Whiteside's pace of 12.5 points per game (ninth on the final League charts) was aided by 7.3 rebounds per contest (third in the League and the highest among players returning this season). Whiteside wasn't the only reason for the vast improvement, as Jeanette Woodbury averaged 10.5 points per contest in 2004-05. She returns for her junior campaign this winter.

UW-Milwaukee's share of second place last season continued a run of six consecutive years in which the Panthers have finished second (either tied or outright) in the League standings. Current

senior forward Molly O'Brien averaged 13.7 points and 7.0 rebounds per game a year ago. She hit a team-high 36 three-pointers last winter, and also led the League at 2.93 steals per contest, registering 82 thefts in 28 games. Junior Aubrey Hampton started 19 games a year ago, posting a rate of 6.4 points per appearance aided by 38 percent shooting behind the three-point arc.

UIC boasts four returning starters, three of whom averaged double-digit scoring last season. The group includes LaShonda Grant (13.9 points per game), Chrissy Dizon (11.4), and Krystal Hugelier (10.6) along with Jacquay Holmes, who fell just short of twin figures with her rate of 9.6 per outing. Dizon also handed out 138 assists and registered 61 steals a year ago, anchoring the backcourt for the Flames.

Butler owns perhaps the most versatile backcourt in the League with a pair of Preseason Second-Team All-League selections in Ellen Hamilton and Jackie Closser. The junior tandem joined forces to average 22 points and seven assists per game last season. Closser provided 10.8 points and 4.89 set-ups per night, with the latter number putting her fourth on the League charts.

Detroit's roster includes five seniors who combined to post 79 starts last season. Those veterans will be relied upon heavily to help UDM rebound from last year's 9-20 overall showing. The Titans' top three scorers from 2004-05 are back this winter, with Pasquino joined by senior guard Katie Solner (11.9 points per contest a year ago) and senior forward Joanna Cooper (6.6).

Youngstown State lost nearly two-thirds of its scoring and rebounding from last year with the departure of four starters. The Penguins' player roster features six freshmen and three sophomores. That group of underclassmen is led by sophomore guard Lauren Branson, a member of the League's All-Newcomer Team last season. Branson set a Penguin frosh record with her 159 assists and became the first freshman ever to lead the League in assists with her 5.68 per-game norm.

CSU looks to the guard combination of Erin Martin and Brittany Korth to provide veteran leadership this season. Martin led the team in scoring (13.1 points per game, eighth in the League), rebounding (5.0), assists (2.86) and steals (1.72) in 2004-05. Korth was named to the Horizon League All-Newcomer Team last winter after averaging 7.0 points and 2.3 assists per contest. Martin also receives support from senior guard Omega Harrington (7.9 points per game a year ago).

Only one Horizon League team enters the 2005-06 season with a new coach as Shannon Reidy takes the reins at Loyola. She inherits a team that returns three starters after losing a pair of 1,000-point club members in Ciara Henderson and Meskhenet Lands. Junior forward Jenna Real leads the cast of returners, averaging 9.4 points and 5.9 rebounds per game in 2004-05. The former total was enhanced by 54 percent shooting from the field. In addition, Mandy Mennella and Danielle Lonie will both return after being plagued with injuries last year.

Men's season begins with tournament action

Three Horizon League teams kicked off the 2005-06 basketball season with tournament appearances as Butler traveled to Laramie, Wyo., for the BCA Invitational, UW-Green Bay kicked things off at the BCA Classic in Seattle and the UW-Milwaukee faced its first competition at the Preseason NIT.

Freshman Ryan Tillema had an auspicious collegiate debut, scoring all of his game-high 18 points in the first half as UW-Green Bay tipped off the 2005-06 season with a convincing 71-48 win over UNC Greensboro in the opening round of the BCA Classic. Tillema's 18 points were the second-most ever by a UW-Green Bay freshman in his debut. The Phoenix advanced to the second round of the tournament where they were defeated by Washington, 87-54. Ryan Evanochko scored nine of his team-high 13 points for the Phoenix in the second half, while Terry Evans added 12.

UW-Milwaukee also kicked the season off early with an appearance in the Preseason NIT against Memphis. UW-Milwaukee looks to improve upon the school-record 26 wins last season, including a 14-2 League mark and a trip to the Sweet Sixteen. Preseason Horizon League Player of the Year Joah Tucker leads four returning starters from that team.

Members, Horizon League set to host numerous NCAA Championships

The Horizon League and several of its member schools are proud and excited to be selected as hosts for a number of NCAA Championships this season and on through the next five years.

Butler and the Horizon League will serve as co-hosts for the 2006 NCAA Division I Men's Final Four to be held April 1 & 3 at the RCA Dome.

Cleveland State also will host a Women's Regional this season at Quicken Loans Arena.

The Men's Final Four will return to Indianapolis in 2010 and the Women's Final Four, hosted by Butler and the Horizon League in 2005, will



be back in 2011. Cleveland State will host the Women's Final in 2007.

In addition, Detroit will host a Men's Regional in 2008 and the Men's Final Four a year later in 2009. Both will be played at Ford Field.



www.horizonleague.org

Book Bonus

For 50 years, the Duke-North Carolina rivalry has featured famous brawls, endless controversy, long-nurtured hatred – and some of the best basketball ever played in the history of the sport. Blue Blood celebrates the history of that rivalry.

Blue Blood

By Art Chansky

During the 1999 season, even as Kansas overcame the departure of stars Paul Pierce and Raef Lafrentz to the NBA, Roy Williams was still thinking about North Carolina. Despite the Jayhawks losing nearly 55 points per game of scoring from the year before, Williams brought them along masterfully to tie for second place in the Big 12 and dismantle Oklahoma State in the championship game to win a third straight conference tournament.

At the NCAA Midwest Regional in New Orleans, they defeated Evansville and then lost an overtime heartbreaker to defending national champion Kentucky. The 23-10 season was among Williams's best coaching accomplishments, but all the talk that weekend was about his *next* job at North Carolina. A regular topic of conversation for more than five years, the speculation increased because a new biography on Dean Smith said Williams would bolt from Kansas whenever Bill Guthridge decided to leave the Tar Heel bench. Williams angrily denied that report but knew Guthridge came close to quitting after the 1998 season and was seriously considering it again.

By now, it was like a double whammy for Williams. He had no idea how long Guthridge would coach, and he faced even more questions about his own longevity at Kansas every time he visited with high school stars and their families.

He had landed a mother lode recruiting class, beating Duke for forwards Nick Collison and Drew Gooden, and adding athletic guard Kirt Hinrich. They were all good young players and better kids who allowed Williams to enjoy the process more than he had in years. None of them, however, wanted to commit unless he committed to them for four years. Frustrated with the Carolina situation and comfortable again with the idea of remaining at Kansas, Williams gave them all his word.

Privately, Williams beat himself up for spending so much time worrying about KU and Carolina. He felt like he was responsible for two teams and hated the fact that he couldn't control his own anxiety as much as he disliked the distraction itself. When Guthridge decided to stay for another season, after contemplating retirement, Williams

told Dean Smith that he was focusing on Kansas, period. If UNC ever came open, he would think about it again.

Williams did go to Chapel Hill that spring, but not for good. In May, he attended graduation ceremonies for his son, Scott, whom he once hoped to coach as a walk-on guard for the Tar Heels. They took a family picture, Roy and his wife Wanda, his daughter, Kimberly, a sophomore at UNC, and Scott in his light blue cap and gown. They all smiled happily, and Williams went back to Lawrence with a new resolve—that he would finish his career at Kansas.

Meanwhile, Duke set another record in June of 1999 when four players, three of them underclassmen and three

dishonest" over what he said was a broken promise that the Killer B's (Chris Burgess, Elton Brand, and Shane Battier) would play together on the front line. Burgess actually started 17 games as a sophomore, but his minutes faded as Battier emerged.

"I won't say Coach promised me certain miracles," Burgess said, "but he did guarantee Elton, Shane, and I would play together."

His father was less diplomatic about Krzyzewski.

"If you aren't on his good side, he doesn't fix that," Ken Burgess said. "If you are, you can do no wrong. Like Shane Battier – he can't do anything wrong. He (Krzyzewski) as no sons, and he picks one of the boys to be his son, and he can do no wrong. Even the players called Shane 'Shane Krzyzewski.'"

Battier was one of three returning players who visited Krzyzewski at his home while he recuperated from his first hip replacement surgery amidst widespread rumors of the mass exodus. Together with Chris Carrawell and Nate James, they wanted to know if Krzyzewski had confidence in those who were coming back. When the coach demonstrated that he did, unwaveringly, Carrawell said, "If you have faith in us, that's all we care about."

Brandt's exit was expected, given his foot injury as a freshman and his status as a reigning national player of the year, and strongly supported by Krzyzewski. Brand had little else to prove on the college level, and his family in working-class upstate New York could use the money. Accordingly, he was picked first overall by the Chicago Bulls and signed a guaranteed \$13 million contract.

Langdon went on the eleventh pick to Cleveland, getting the boost of coming from a great program that many Carolina players had enjoyed over the years. Duke provided the kind of publicity someone like Langdon from the outpost of Alaska might have never received otherwise. A deadly shooter, for sure, Langdon's speed, ball handling, and defense were considered pro liabilities, but he had won so much, and played for Krzyzewski, so the Cavaliers gambled with their first-round selection.

Duke's next two draftees gave Krzyzewski as much

Roy Williams beat himself up for spending so much time worrying about KU and Carolina. He felt like he was responsible for two teams and hated the fact that he couldn't control his own anxiety as much as he disliked the distraction itself.

of them starters, were selected in the first round of the same NBA draft. The Blue Devils also lost a back-up center projected to be a starter, which in other years would have been manageable. The departures came with both consent and controversy and seemingly depleted the Blue Devils to also-ran status in the ACC.

The starters (sophomores Elton Brand and Will Avery and senior Trajan Langdon) and a sixth man (freshman Corey Maggette who scored as many points per minute as any starter) had left a team that *couldn't* lose the national championship, but did. Plus, since-forgotten sophomore Chris Burgess transferred to Utah, his home state university, closer to his disgruntled family.

Ken Burgess had bugged Mike Krzyzewski about his son's playing time and called the Duke coach "petty and

heartburn as the first two had given him pride.

Maggette virtually disappeared after the season, unduly influenced by an overblown column in his hometown *Chicago Sun-Times* written during the 1999 NCAA Tournament by Sam Smith (who authored *The Jordan Rules*) that said he would go first in the draft to the Bulls. Maggette was already the subject of an NCAA probe into his summers of AAU ball before he enrolled at Duke. He was naively led to believe that if he came out, the Bulls would make him one of their three lottery picks that year.

Plus, his family was hurt that Krzyzewski gave him less than eighteen minutes a game and benched him late against UConn in the 1999 national championship game. Most importantly, the mess in Kansas City the summer of 1997 between his junior and senior years in high school had put his college eligibility in jeopardy.

Prosecutors in Missouri were trying to nail admitted cocaine dealer Myron Piggie on a new scam. In 1987 they couldn't prove that Piggie dealt enough drugs for a 10-year prison term, but then Piggie was funneling Nike money to members of his Children's Mercy Hospital 76ers AAU team. Paying amateurs was not technically illegal, so they charged Piggie with conspiring with his players to defraud several NCAA schools by keeping their payments secret.

Duke had gotten in on Maggette late in the fall of 1997 after losing recruits Danny Miller to Maryland and Dane Fife to Indiana. Krzyzewski recruited Maggette through his prep coach and wound up beating Stanford for his commitment. He did receive a vague warning that players on the 76ers were paid and there might be some dirty laundry with Maggette, but the official probe in Kansas City did not come out until after Maggette had turned pro. The real fault of coaches like Krzyzewski (Dean Smith, and Roy Williams, etc.) was their continued association with Nike, a company that exploited child labor in Southeast Asia and remained an influence with AAU basketball by underwriting teams like the 76ers.

Nearly one hundred credits shy of graduation, Maggette applied to enter the draft the week before the deadline and went No. 13 to Seattle, from where he was immediately traded to Orlando. He eventually admitted accepting AAU money, but Duke got off because it was ruled to have had no knowledge of what happened during the summer of 1997. Otherwise the Blue Devil's 37 wins in 1999 in which Maggette played, including their second-place in the NCAA Tournament, could have been forfeited.

Krzyzewski badly wanted Avery back for one more year, his junior season, to help groom incoming freshman Jason Williams and give Duke some depth in the backcourt. Without him, the Blue Devils would have only one true guard among their top nine players. So when Avery promised him he would return, Duke still looked like the team to beat in 2000.

But Avery did not keep his word. He entered the draft and went to Minnesota on the fourteenth pick, right after Maggette. That led to controversy and a story in *ESPN The Magazine* that infuriated Dukies everywhere.

The basis of the *ESPN* article was a meeting between Krzyzewski and Avery's mother, who traveled to Durham

from her home in Augusta, Georgia, where she lived just above the poverty line and worked at a power plant until she got laid off. That Avery might turn pro miffed Krzyzewski because he had made a personal commitment to helping him and thought he owed Duke another year.

"Your son is going to (expletive deleted) my program," Krzyzewski told Terry Simonton, Avery's mother, according to the magazine story.

"Coach K got bad-mouth, rude, personal. He forgot who he was talking to," Simonton was quoted.

Krzyzewski did not deny he used such language. "I talked to William like I always talked to William," he said in the article. "I told him what I felt was the truth. If you don't want to hear that, you're not going to like what I say.

Duke departures, including assistant coach Quin Snyder leaving to take the Missouri job, but the Avery coverage obviously hurt the most.

Kirkpatrick was a long-time Duke nemesis, just as 1977 Duke graduate and best-selling author John Feinstein was considered a Carolina antagonist by their fans and athletic officials. Feinstein infuriated Tar Heels after the 1991 ACC Tournament when he penned a controversial column in the defunct *National* sports daily depicting Smith as "A Winner and a Whiner." He also publicly predicted, correctly, in 1995 that Rasheed Wallace would turn pro after his sophomore season, and said Wallace had stopped going to class. Smith denied that part of it vehemently – at first reacting, "You have to remember, John is a Duke graduate" – and while Wallace did enter the draft he could have returned to UNC for his junior year.

Kirkpatrick said he told his editors at *ESPN The Magazine* not to assign him the Duke story because he "knew no matter what I wrote or how it came out, it would seem to the Duke people overwhelmingly negative, prejudiced, and one-sided." During Kirkpatrick's days as a senior college basketball writer at *Sports Illustrated*, he claimed to be identified "as an NC guy" by those associated with Duke whenever and wherever he covered the Blue Devils. Feinstein has said the same about Tar Heel loyalists.

Kirkpatrick had interviewed Krzyzewski for the story at a high school all-star camp in Indianapolis in June of 1999, sitting with him on folding chairs at the far end of the court in clear view of other coaches in attendance. They spend a half-hour together, during which Kirkpatrick said he took careful notes because he expected a strong response from Duke after Simonton's remarks were published.

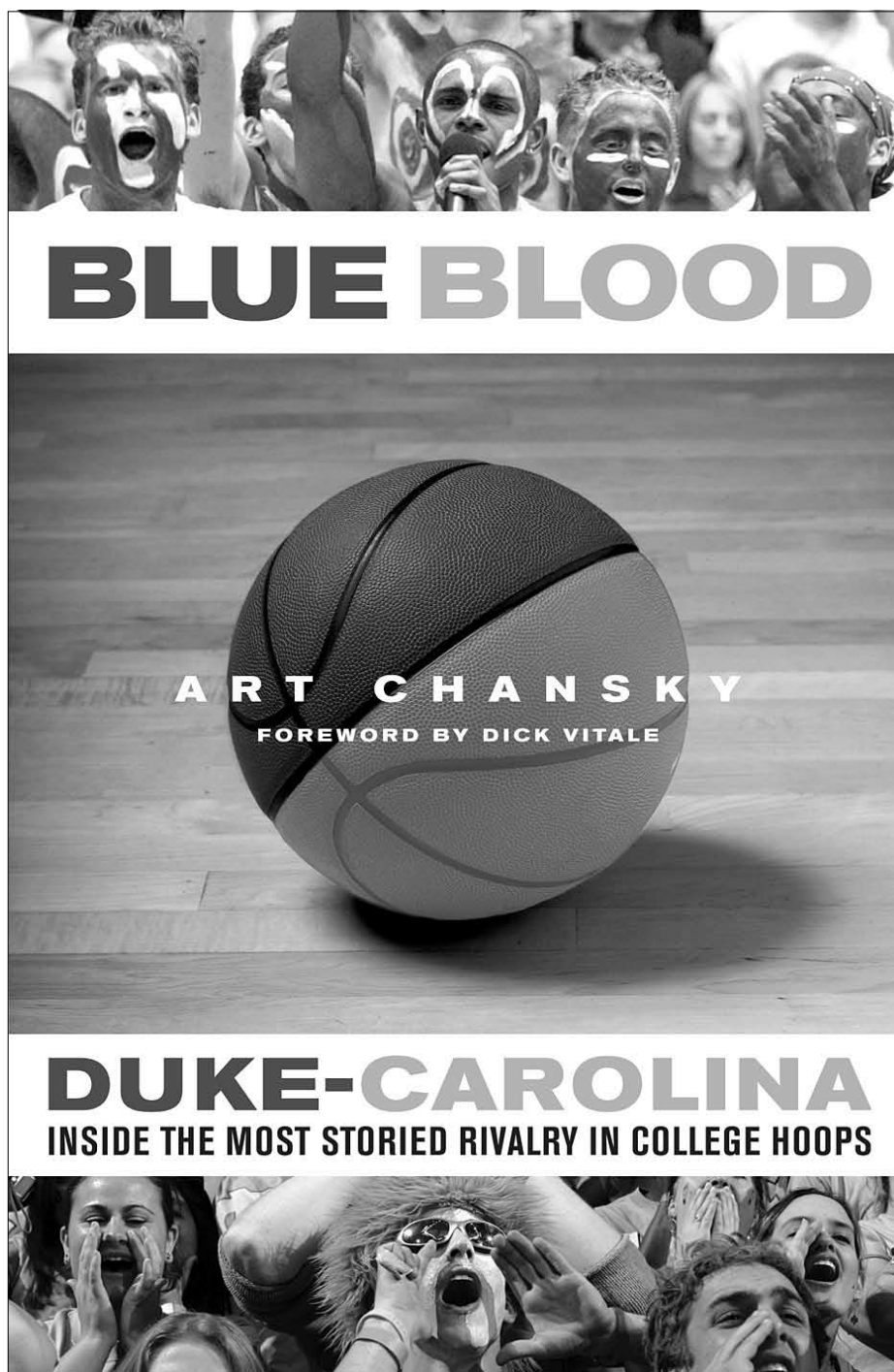
After the story came out, Mike Cragg, Duke's sports information director at the time, wrote a harsh letter to John Papanek, editor of *ESPN The Magazine*, claiming Krzyzewski did not use curse words with Simonton and that the article was slanted because of its author. Cragg also said Kirkpatrick was no longer welcome at Duke athletic events.

Over the next few months, other recanted the story. Simonton said that Krzyzewski never cursed in front of her, and Avery allowed that while his coach used profanity he did not hear any with his mother. Avery also said he believed Krzyzewski had his best interest in mind when he asked him to stay one more year and polish his skills. That, of course, was borne out by Avery leaving the NBA before his three-year guaranteed contract was up.

In December of 1999, Kirkpatrick requested a media credential for Duke's home game against DePaul. Cragg, who was also most miffed by the repeated use of the derogatory term "Dookies" in the article, said there were no more press seats available. Kirkpatrick got in to the game on a ticket from DePaul Athletics Director Bill Bradshaw and eventually had his press privileges restored at Duke.

Nevertheless, the hard feelings hardly went away. The next time he covered a Duke-Carolina game in Cameron Indoor Stadium, Kirkpatrick wound up on the wrong side of both schools.

As the turn of the century approached, and college



But that's what I owe William."

Simonton countered, "Coach K is selfish. He talked about a so-called close Duke family. But he just wanted to protect his program. He lied to us about where William would go in the draft. Late in the first round? Maybe even second round? Come on. Even I could pick up the papers and read he was going earlier than that."

The article had another twist that further angered Duke. Published in August of 1999 and entitled "The Blue Flew," it was written by 1965 UNC grad Curry Kirkpatrick, inflaming the controversy. The story chronicled all of the

basketball continued to grow and change, the biggest question at Duke was: Could the Blue Devils manage to rebound from the early NBA losses—as Smith and Carolina had for three decades?

Robert McAdoo, the junior-college transfer and lynchpin of UNC's 1972 Final Four team, was the first player to leave early. Smith replaced him with another eventual first-round draft choice, Bobby Jones. Next went James Worthy and Michael Jordan, national players of the year, followed by J. R. Reid in 1989. UNC still had the highest winning percentage of any college program in the decade. In the 1990s, Rasheed Wallace, Jerry Stackhouse, Vince Carter, and Antawn Jamison left a total of six college seasons on the table, but that didn't stop the Tar Heels from reaching give more Final Fours. Guard Jeff McInnis also gave up his senior year against the advice of Smith, who wanted him to stay for the 1997 season and replaced him with freshman Ed Cota (the Tar Heels made two straight Final Fours anyway.)

Now that the same migration had begun with Krzyzewski's program, could the Blue Devils do as well?

After having his hip replaced, Krzyzewski held a midsummer press conference and addressed the issue. He said the early departures had a domino effect, allowing underclassmen to get recognized before their time. "If Jamison and Carter don't leave UNC early, Elton Brand's picture is not on all the preseason magazines," he said. "Kids are widely publicized before they've had a chance to do very much."

Fortunately, Duke had taken advantage of Smith's retirement and signed two of the best recruits in the country. Jason Williams and Mike Dunleavy narrowed their choices to the two rivals and both made decisions based on who was coaching at one school and who wasn't coaching at the other.

Carolina cooled on Jason Williams because he wanted to play point guard (Guthridge considered him more of a small shooting guard), and the Heels had the celebrated Ronald Curry on their roster. Krzyzewski said he had a spot for Williams and would give him the ball, just as he had Bobby Hurley, Jeff Capel, Chris Collins, and Steve Wojciechowski as underclassmen.

Dunleavy might have gone to Carolina had Smith still been active. Mike Dunleavy Sr., the long-time NBA coach, played for Frank McGuire at South Carolina and against UNC. He sat with Smith in the Dean Dome during their official visit and said he could see his son as a Tar Heel. Mike Jr. and his mother, however, both favored playing for Krzyzewski, who must have known something because he passed on higher-rated Californian Casey Jacobson (Stanford) to wait on Dunleavy.

Along with Alaskan Carlos Boozer, who was signed late after Brand announced he was leaving Williams and Dunleavy positioned the young Blue Devils to maintain their domination over the ACC in 2000, despite playing a one-guard lineup all season. Krzyzewski was healthy again, teaching and more engaged in practice than he had been in three years. Duke's stars were Carrawell and Battier and the emerging Jason Williams at point guard.

The Blue Devils opened the 2000 season with two straight defeats for the first time in forty-one years, but they beat themselves both times with horrendous shooting at the Coaches vs. Cancer Classic in New York. They hit less than 20 percent in an overtime loss to thirteenth-ranked Stanford and weren't much better in losing to top-ranked UConn the next night.

Just like the year before, they were on a tear, winning 16 straight games before going to Chapel Hill on February 3 for an expected mismatch. Carolina had lost four straight games for the first time in eight years and, despite a veteran

lineup and hotshot freshman Joseph Forte, couldn't seem to get it together. The Tar Heels had opened the season ranked fifth but had already lost three games at home and dropped out of the polls by the time Duke got to town.

The Heels' fan base was howling for Guthridge's scalp, saying enough was enough for the veteran coach who supposedly never wanted the job anyway. When they were down by 17 points at the half, the students who had lynched Dean Smith in effigy thirty-five years earlier were now angry middle-aged men watching somewhere. But basketball was still two halves.

Duke was up 19 with fourteen minutes left when Cota led a dramatic Carolina rally. Racing the second-half clock the Heels suddenly played to their pre-season hype, chopped away at the lead, and tied the score at 73-73 on Forte's three-pointer with five seconds left to force overtime. But three inside feeds and layups by Boozer gave the Blue Devils a record sixteenth consecutive ACC road win and dealt the Heels a fourth loss at home.

Unranked for the remainder of the season, Carolina lost to Duke for a fifth straight time on Carrawell's Senior Day, when the Weber State-clad Craziest went especially nuts over Battier hitting six three-pointers and hanging 30 on the Tar Heels. It was a record-breaking afternoon for the program.

Duke finished 15-1 and first in the ACC for the fourth straight season, completing a three-year run of going 46-2 in conference games that included new marks for consecu-

*Duke had beaten Carolina twice
but flamed out in the East Regional. Carolina
had somehow rallied to not only upset
Stanford but make another Final Four when
least expected to do it. Who had the better year
in 2000? It was arguable.*

tive victories at home (31) and as well as away (24 and counting). Krzyzewski won several national coach of the year awards for sustaining his success in light of the early NBA losses.

Struggling UNC, which concluded the regular season 18-12, avoided what surely would have been a sixth straight defeat to Duke by sleep-walking through its 2000 ACC Tournament opening against Wake Forest and letting the Deacons take the hit in the semifinals. After the half-hearted loss to Wake, Guthridge appeared despondent at the press conference and the UNC fat cats were *furious* at the tailgate dinner between sessions. Boosters besieged Rams Club officials demanding that something change.

"It's up to Dean, it's up to Dean," one club officer repeated, holding up two palms.

Two days later, Duke took home a second consecutive ACC title by swamping Maryland in the championship game to secure the top seed in the NCAA East Regional, where it was favored to roll on to another Final Four. Reflecting the Blue Devils' surprise success, unheralded Carrawell won ACC Player of the Year. Krzyzewski, who had been named coach of the *decade* (1990s) by his peers, also won ACC Coach of the Year for the fifth time.

Having lost four of its last six games, Carolina limped to a No. 8 seed in the South on the basis of an 18-13 record and third-place in the ACC (9-7) and was expected to be an early out. If the Tar Heels got by Missouri (coached by former Duke Quin Snyder) in the first round, they would certainly be sent packing by top-seeded Stanford.

March can be so maddening, however, and Carolina

pulled off a crazy comeback that no one ever saw coming.

Humiliated by their play going in, the resuscitated Tar Heels handled Missouri and took advantage of the No. 1 seed most vulnerable to their size and quickness. Finally playing to their preseason promise, they clobbered Stanford inside and won on freshman Forte's late three-pointer with the shot clock expiring.

At the South Regional in Austin, Texas, they rallied to beat fourth-seeded Tennessee at about the same time top-ranked but tired Duke was losing to eleventh-ranked Florida in the Syracuse Sweet Sixteen; just like that, they had a chance to trump the Blue Devils by making it all the way to Indianapolis. Two days later, Forte's 28 points were too much for Bill Self's last Tulsa team, and unranked UNC became the worst-ranked team to ever make the Final Four.

Carolina's Ratings Percentage Index (RPI) of 41 was the highest of any Final Four team since the NCAA began using the standard. Wisconsin had an RPI of 32, Florida 18 and Michigan State, the only top seed making it, was 13, to fill out the weakest Final Four in history. Duke had a higher RPI than all of them, but its lack of depth proved fatal after relying on a versatile six-man team all season. The Blue Devils had faded in the second half against Florida; instead of a second consecutive Final Four, they had to settle for going home with a 29-5 record.

For a change, Carolina had lasted longer in the tournament, which was as important to many Tar Heels as making their second Final Four under Guthridge and UNC's sixth in the last ten years. Their second-half rally against Florida fell short, but how the Tar Heels completed their 22-14 season was more than enough to make their fans happy.

They could also throw Krzyzewski's new standard back in his face, that the team with the longer NCAA run had the better season regardless of what happened in the head-to-head games. Duke had beaten Carolina twice but flamed out in the East Regional. Carolina had somehow rallied to not only upset Stanford but make another Final Four when least expected to do it. Who had the better year in 2000? It was arguable.

It also played right into the speculation that Guthridge could now step down and allow Roy Williams to come home at last. The UNC faithful thought it had seen the foreshadowing two weeks earlier in an NCAA second-round game in Winston-Salem, where eighth-seeded Kansas took on No. 1 Duke.

During the second half, Krzyzewski and Williams were nose to nose at the scorer's table, arguing with official Lenny Wirtz about Krzyzewski's complaint that Williams was out of the coach's box.

"Mike, I'm yelling at my players, not the officials," Williams shouted.

"You're still out of the coach's box," Krzyzewski countered.

"Bull...!" Williams told him, inches from his face.

It was something neither coach considered a big deal after Duke won 69-64. Nevertheless, the confrontation stayed on the minds of Carolina fans through their team's return from Indianapolis. They clamored to know how long Guthridge would stay, most believing the timing was better than ever for his retirement with honor and a transition to the Williams era.

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ESPN, ESPN2 and ESPN Plus will broadcast the first round and quarterfinal games while CBS Sports will televise the semifinals and championship contests of the ninth annual Big Ten Tournament.

At least 71 Big Ten women's basketball contests will be televised in 2005-06, including 11 nationally. CBS Sports will broadcast a pair of games, ESPN2 will have seven, and ESPNU and CSTV will each carry at least one. All 10 Big Ten Tournament games will also be televised with the final carried live on ESPN2.

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THIS WEEK IN TELEVISION

NETWORK	7:00PM	7:30PM	8:00PM	8:30PM
CBS	<< Men's Basketball: Michigan State at Iowa		Road... Final Fou	
CSN	Women's Basketball: Purdue at Ohio State			
CSTV	Women's Basketball on CSTV: Michigan at Penn State			
ESPN	<< Sportscenter	Men's Basketball: Wisconsin at Indiana >>		
ESPN2	<< Men's Basketball: Illinois at Michigan		Gameday	
ESPNCL	Classic Drive Thru: College Basketball - Indiana at Purdue (1993)			
ESPNU	The Season: Wisconsin MBB		The Season II: Illinois MBB	
FSN	Women's Basketball: Northwestern at Minnesota			



Sheryl Swoopes' coming-out party changes only her legacy



Women's Hoops

Once upon a time, when basketball was still basketball, Sheryl Swoopes put on such a head-turning performance at Atlanta's Omni that made even the most chauvinistic grousers forget it was on the women's stage.

That's because Swoopes hung an NCAA championship game record 47 points on Ohio State for victorious Texas Tech in 1993, and it led to her becoming the first female player to endorse a basketball shoe with the Air Swoopes.

It was the dawn of a new age for women's college, Olympic and professional basketball, and Swoopes has been well-positioned to contribute to the game's development across the board.

However, except for the occasional Olympic gold-medal run, little has been written since about Swoopes on the hardwood. Even after helping lead the Houston Comets to the first four WNBA titles, there has been mostly indifference paid to her exploits as a professional basketball player.

For most of this past summer, her MVP performance was ignored by the mainstream sports media. But early in a publication that rarely gives women athletes anything but sensational treatment "broke" what's certain to be included among the biggest sports stories of the year. ESPN The Magazine was the platform where Swoopes admitted her endorsement of a lesbian cruise company was a not-so-subtle way of saying she's, uh, well.

You know.

Yes, a female athlete! *Quelle surprise!*

The reaction from gay advocacy groups and mostly male, middle-aged newspaper columnists who probably have never seen her play forced the planetary systems to be realigned for two weeks while they pontificated on the meaning of all this. The first "out" gay athlete in professional team sports. The "gay Jackie Robinson." What courage! What bravery! Etc., etc.

Even the never-ending cable musing over the fate of

Natalee Holloway was placed on the backburner while the Swoopes story transcended sports and delved into what this says about – naturally – American society.

Never mind that another well-known gay female athlete, tennis star Amelie Mauresmo, opened up years ago with little fanfare in her native France.

The live-and-let-live mantra is making some more headway on these shores, and the hope is Swoopes won't suffer financially, as did Billie Jean King and Martina Navratilova. If anything, Swoopes reportedly had 600,000 lucrative reasons not to disclose her sexuality. But the gossipy popular culture that infects public discourse in America was employed to set a creepy, familiar tone in fleshing out the aftermath of her announcement. It didn't take long for the Swoopes declaration to descend into a tawdry, tabloid stew of empty melodrama, another media soap opera churned out with formulaic, Oprah-style sentimentality.

This was treated as such a big deal that the news about actor George Takei, who played "Sulu" on Star Trek and who came out about the same time as Swoopes, was virtually ignored. Yes, Sulu, too!

Within days, there were photos of Swoopes as she gave more interviews with her partner, ex-Comets assistant Alisa Scott, seated beside her. Which led to anguished commentary about the ethics of sleeping with a coach and letting that sort of thing continue on a sports team. Quelle scandal!

At the same time, professional opiners wrote and talked themselves silly in raising an ancillary subject: When are we going to see a male athlete do this? ESPN.com wrote about an anonymous gay male athletic director, and even the formerly august pages of the *New York Times* bemoaned the homophobic culture in male locker rooms.

Some perspective, please?

In America, it is still permissible to run gays out of



Sheryl Swoopes

Wendy Parker

the military simply because they say they are gay. Voters in progressive states such as Oregon soundly support measures to ban gay marriage. Political evangelists such as James Dobson get plenty of airtime with their idiotic claims that Sponge Bob's supposed square pants are really fancy ones. In Swoopes' home state of Texas, a female high school basketball coach in a small town was canned last season because busybodies found out about her "lifestyle."

If sports truly is a reflection of society, then the sorry state of sexuality in athletics is hardly the most pressing issue.

The impact of the Swoopes saga doesn't figure to resonate beyond the media news cycle that perpetuated it. Like so many sensational *stories du jour*, this one will recede into the background.

The WNBA will still struggle to be taken seriously by the same media entities that glommed all over the Swoopes story. Women's college basketball coaches will still be persuading anxious parents of recruitable daughters that they have nothing to worry about. If she survives a recent effort to punish her for alleged anti-gay bias, Penn State coach Rene Portland will continue to do all she can to keep her program lesbian-free. Even while she runs it into the ground.

And NFL, NBA, Major League Baseball and other male team sports will be as hostile to openly gay colleagues as the Pentagon.

The only thing that will change is the legacy of Sheryl Swoopes. It's hard not to be impressed with how she has handled herself, with her desire to be candid and end the misery she felt at concealing the most meaningful, important issues in her life. She withstood "The Truman Show" mentality to which she was subjected with grace, dignity and calm.

But it's also unfortunate that all the glorious basketball she has played won't be remembered as much as the media circus that attached more importance to her as a social figure than as a gifted, splendid athlete.

Wendy Parker, who has written for *Basketball Times* since 1991, is on the college sports staff at *The Atlanta Journal-Constitution*.

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Winthrop's Marshall overlooked, despite numbers too good to ignore

Mid-Majors

Angela Lento



When you take a look at the numbers, it is hard to imagine why Gregg Marshall is entering his eighth season as the head coach at Winthrop. In his first seven seasons, Marshall has compiled a pretty impressive resume, which includes five trips in seven years to the NCAA tournament. Has anyone noticed?

- Led Winthrop to its first Big South Conference regular season title in 1999.

- Led Winthrop to first NCAA Tournament appearance in 1999.

- Led Winthrop to first back-to-back Big South Conference tournament titles in school history in 1999 and 2000.

- Led Winthrop to first back-to-back NCAA appearances in Big South Conference history in 1999 and 2000.

- Led Winthrop to a No. 14 seed in the 2000 and 2005 NCAA Tournaments, the highest-ever for a Big South Conference school.

- Led Winthrop to first three-peat in Big South Conference history in 2001.

- Led Winthrop to a fourth straight Big South title



Gregg Marshall

in 2002.

- Led Winthrop to a third 20-win season and the regular season Big South Conference championship in 2003.

- Was voted Big South Conference coach of the year in 1999, 2003 and 2005.

- Led Winthrop to a fourth 20-win season and the Big South Conference regular-season championship in 2005.

- Led Winthrop to a school and Big South Conference record for wins in a season with 27 in 2004-05.

Such numbers are hard to ignore, but they haven't, for some reason, been impressive enough for a high-profile program to lure him from Rock Hill, SC.

Not that it consumes Marshall.

"You can't start worrying about things

you cannot control," Marshall says. "I am concerned about our next opponent. If you win, everything else will take care of itself. We are going to have another solid basketball team this season, and the goal is to win another Big South championship."

For many, that would be nothing more than lip

service or coach-speak, but Marshall is dedicated solely to the task at hand. He has no problem talking up his team, but you won't hear him campaigning for higher profile job. And you won't hear him saying what's politically correct. He's not afraid to make his point. And a lot of people misread that.

Some who don't know Marshall might suggest that he is cocky and downright arrogant.

When you lose, nobody notices what type of person you are, but when you win, your manner and choice of words is deemed abrasive. And many point to this so-called attitude as being the reason for his inability to climb the coaching ladder.

It's ridiculous.

Over the past few years, Marshall has been linked to a lot of openings, some real and many just rumored. When actually involved in the interview process, the school simply went in a different direction.

There is a long list of current coaches who have consistently been in the mix for a higher-profile

job every season but remain at their current place of employment. The big difference between them and Marshall is that the Winthrop coach is dancing every year in March.

You can make a strong case that Winthrop has been one of the top mid-major programs during Marshall's tenure. If you exclude Gonzaga from the discussion, there is a compelling argument for Winthrop to be tops. But five trips to the dance have resulted in five losses.

It's about the only thing Marshall hasn't done – win in March. If the majors are judged by how deep they go into March, are mid-majors now judged on whether or not they can win an opening round game?

"That may be the case," says Marshall, "but I feel that on our level being a consistently successful program means competing for your conference championship, whether regular season or tournament, every year. Our goal from day one has been to be playing in March with a chance to advance. If we find ourselves playing in March post-season play, then we consider our season a success."

Winning in March requires first getting to March, and few at the mid-major level have done it as frequently in the past seven years as Marshall. The Winthrop Eagles in March have become almost commonplace.

"There have been a lot of reasons for our success over the past seven years," says Marshall. "It starts with players and we have been able to attract some talented young men to our program and they have allowed us to coach them. I have had a great coaching staff, and Winthrop has continued to upgrade the facilities, which has given us one of the finest arenas on any school on our level."

Still, many aren't overly impressed with the accomplishments. According to some, the Big South Conference is a weak league. When Gonzaga wins the WCC every year, it's because they are dominant, but when Winthrop wins, it's because their conference is weak.

And detractors will use that notion again. Winthrop became the first school in the history of the Big South Conference to be a unanimous preseason pick, receiving all 32 first-place votes. Marshall welcomes back 98 percent of his scoring and 97 percent of his rebounding from last year's squad, so it looks like another strong season for the Eagles.

You can't dissect winning. It is what it is, and Marshall has done it as well as anyone over the past seven years. He entered the season (142 wins) needing just 19 wins to become the school's all-time leader. He has a 10-year contract, and his current salary package is four times as much as he made in his first season at Winthrop.

So why he is still in Rock Hill, SC?

"Every year, my job gets better," says Marshall. "In 1998, I was given an opportunity to be the head coach at Winthrop. Nobody else gave me that opportunity. A lot of people don't realize how hard it can be to find a good job in this profession. And I have a good one."

Quite often, the best job is the one you have.

Angela Lento, co-founder of *CollegeInsider.com*, created "The Runway to the Final Four," spearheaded *Jim Phelan Bow Tie Day (2003)* and has worked with *Trey Schwab to bring attention to the "Organ Donor Awareness" program.*



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Knight, Roy Williams sit atop two prestigious lists

Clark Francis

Hoop Scoop

One of the many things that separates us apart from all of the competition is our annual Career Coaching Record and Ranking by Number of Wins for All Division I Head Coaches. As things stand now, the names of the coaches at the top of the list reads like a Who's Who of the Top Coaches in the Game today.

And right at the top of the list is Texas Tech's Bob Knight, who went into the season needing just 26 wins to pass Dean Smith and become the all-time winningest head coach in the history of the game. Knight entered with 854 wins over 39 years, and, with an average of 21.9 wins per season, is on pace to catch Smith with his 4th win during the 2006-2007 season.

We also suspect that Knight's record will stand the test of time, because Oklahoma State's Eddie Sutton is 73 wins behind Knight and Arizona's Lute Olson needs 113 wins, Temple's John Chaney needs 130 wins, Duke's Mike Krzyzewski needs 133 wins and Syracuse's Jim Boeheim and Connecticut's Jim Calhoun both need 151 wins to catch Knight on the active win list.

In other words, if Knight retired right now and Sutton continued to coach just until he caught up with where Knight is today, he'd have to coach 3.3 more years, based on Sutton's average of 22.3 wins for the last 35 years.

We also find it incredible that North Carolina head coach Roy Williams has averaged 27.6 wins for the last 17 years and, as a result, not only has the highest average number of wins when compared to all other active Division I head coaches, but also has stood the test of timing in doing so.

And making the story even more amazing is the fact that there are only three coaches (Williams, Kentucky's Tubby Smith and Tennessee's Bruce Pearl) who are ranked among the top 10 on our Average Wins Per Season list who have seven or more years of head coaching experience at a four-year college.

We also think it's interesting that Southern Illinois head coach Chris Lowery, who had 27 wins in his first season as a head coach, and Purdue head coach Matt Painter, who had 25 wins in his one year at Southern Illinois prior to taking the Boilermakers job a year ago, check in at No. 2 and tied at No. 5 on this list. Either Illinois coach Bruce Weber, who also checks in at No. 15 on this list with 23.7 wins per season over seven years, did a great job of laying the foundation at Southern Illinois or he had some great assistant coaches who have been following him along the way. Our guess is that it was some of both.

Also checking in on this list are Gonzaga's Mark Few at No. 3, with 26.5 wins per season for six years, Pittsburgh's Jamie Dixon at No. 4, with 25.5 wins per season for two years, Nevada's Mark Fox is tied at No. 5 with 25 wins in his first season, Tubby Smith at No. 7 with 24.5 wins per season for 14 years, UTEP's Doc Sadler at No. 8 with 24.5 wins per season for six years, Pearl at No. 9 with 24.4 wins per season for 13 years, Ohio State's Thad Matta at No. 10 with 24.4 wins per season for five years, Boeheim at No. 11 with 24.2 wins per season for 29 years, Krzyzewski at No. 12 with 24.0 wins per season for 30 years, Birmingham Southern's Duane Reboul at No. 13 with 23.9 wins per season for 16 years, Memphis' John Calipari at No. 14 with 23.7 wins per season for 13 years, Louisville's Rick Pitino at No. 16 with 23.6 wins

per season for 19 years, Michigan State's Tom Izzo at No. 17 with 23.7 wins per season for 10 years, Olson at No. 18 with 23.2 wins per season for 32 years, Western Michigan's Steve Hawkins at No. 19 with 23.0 wins per season for two years, Wisconsin's Bo Ryan at No. 20 with 22.7 wins per season for 21 years, Murray State's Mick Cronin at No. 21 with 22.5 wins per season for two years, Oklahoma State's Eddie Sutton at No. 22 with 22.3 wins per season for 35 years, South Dakota State's Scott Nagy at No. 23 with 22.0 wins per season for 10 years, Knight at No. 24 with 21.9 wins per season for 39 years, Chaney at No. 25 with 21.9 wins per season for 33 years, Pepperdine's Paul Westphal at No. 26 with 21.9 wins per season for seven years, UAB's Mike Anderson at No. 27 with 21.7 wins per season for three years, Wake Forest's Skip Prosser at No. 28 with 21.6 wins per season for 12 years, Calhoun at No. 29 with 21.3 wins per season for 33 years, Mississippi State's Rick Stansbury at No. 30 with 21.3 wins per season for seven years, Kent State's Jim Christian at No. 31 with 21.3 wins per season for three years, Kansas' Bill Self at No. 32 with 21.2 wins per season for 12 years, Stephen F. Austin's Danny Kasper at No. 33 with 21.1 wins per season for 14 years, Alabama's Mark Gottfried at No. 34 with 21.1 wins per season for 10 years, College of Charleston's Tommy Herrion at No. 35 with 21.0 wins per season for three years, Dayton's Brian Gregory at No. 36 with 21.0 wins per season for two years, Vermont's Mike Lonergan at No. 37 with 20.9 wins per season for 12 years, Lamar's Billy Tubbs at No. 38 with 20.8 wins per season for 30 years, UC-Irvine's Pat Douglass at No. 39 with 20.8 wins

per season for 24 years, Florida A&M's Mike Gillespie at No. 40 with 20.8 wins per season for 15 years, William & Mary's Tony Shaver at No. 41 with 20.7 wins per season for 18 years, Florida's Billy Donovan at No. 42 with 20.7 wins per season for 11 years, Butler's Todd Lickliter at No. 43 with 20.5 wins per season for four years, Utah State's Stew Morrill at No. 44 with 20.3 wins per season for 19 years, Southern Cal's Tim Floyd at No. 45 with 20.3 wins per season for 12 years, Saint Joseph's Phil Martelli at No. 46 with 20.3 wins per season for 10 years, Georgia Tech's Paul Hewitt at No. 47 with 20.3 wins per season for eight years, Winthrop's Gregg Marshall at No. 48 with 20.3 wins per season for seven years, Alabama A&M's Vann Pettaway at No. 49 with 20.2 wins per season for 19 years, Texas' Rick Barnes at No. 50 with 20.2 wins per season for 18 years, Marquette's Tom Crean at No. 51 with 20.2 wins per season for six years, Notre Dame's Mike Brey at No. 52 with 20.1 wins per season for 10 years, Maryland's Gary Williams at No. 53 with 20.0 wins per season for 27 years, Virginia Commonwealth's Jeff Capel at No. 54 with 20.0 wins per season for three years and Louisiana-Lafayette's Robert Lee and Chattanooga's John Shulman, who are tied at No. 55 with 20.0 wins per season for one year.

In other words, there are 56 active Division I head coaches who are averaging 20 or more wins per year and there are 11 coaches (Knight, Sutton, Chaney, Calhoun, Olson, Krzyzewski, Tubbs, Boeheim, Gary Williams, Douglass and Ryan) who have won 20 or more games for 20 years or more.

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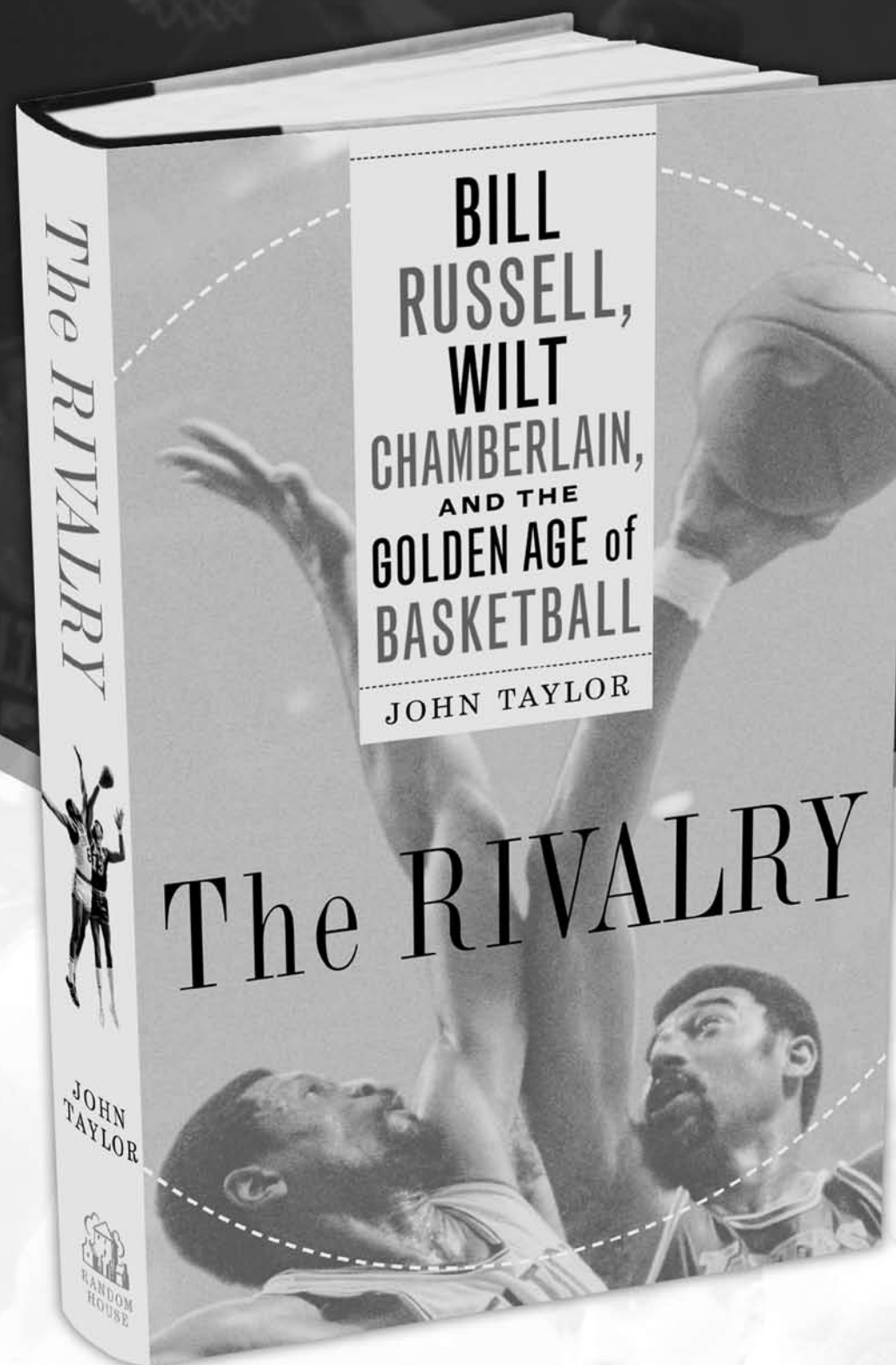
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Hoop Scoop's Ranking of Head Coaches by Career Wins

Coach	Rec	Avg	Rank	Coach	Rec	Avg	Rank	Coach	Rec	Avg	Rank
1. Bob Knight, Texas Tech	854-333	21.9	84. Tom Izzo, Mich. St.	233-97	23.3	168. Dennis Felton, Georgia	124-88	17.7	252. Mick Cronin, Murray State	45-17	22.5
2. Eddie Sutton, Okla. State	781-299	22.3	85. Herb Sendek, N.C. State	232-148	19.3	169. Craig Rasmuson, No. Colo.	124-171	11.3	253. Ricky Stokes, East Carolina	45-70	11.3
3. Lute Olson, Arizona	741-256	23.2	86. Dick Hunsaker, Utah Val	231-96	19.3	170. James Green, Miss. Val. St.	123-109	15.4	254. Steve Donahue, Cornell	45-90	9.0
4. John Chaney, Temple	724-297	21.9	87. Mick Durham, Mont St.	231-198	16.4	171. Thad Matta, Ohio State	122-43	24.4	255. Mike Perry, Georgia State	44-33	14.7
5. Mike Krzyzewski, Duke	721-246	24.0	88. John Brady, LSU	229-179	16.4	172. Tom Crean, Marquette	121-65	20.2	256. Tod Kowalczyk, Wis-GB	44-42	14.7
6. Jim Boeheim, Syracuse	703-241	24.2	89. Billy Donovan, Florida	228-112	20.7	173. Ed DeChellis, Penn State	121-135	13.4	257. Leonard Perry, Idaho	44-72	11.0
7. Jim Calhoun, Connecticut	703-310	21.3	90. Kevin Stallings, Vanderbilt	228-146	19.0	174. Keith Richard, La. Tech	120-84	17.1	258. Michael Holton, Portland	43-73	10.8
8. Billy Tubbs, Lamar	624-326	20.8	91. Perry Watson, Detroit	227-140	18.9	175. Steve Merfeld, Evansville	120-112	15.0	259. Brian Gregory, Dayton	42-20	21.0
9. Tom Davis, Drake	568-322	18.9	92. Dennis Wolff, Boston U.	222-151	17.1	176. Quin Snyder, Missouri	116-80	19.3	260. Jay John, Oregon State	42-46	14.0
10. Tom Penders, Houston	545-375	17.6	93. Jeff Jones, American	221-175	17.0	177. Bill Marlin, Sam Houston St.	116-84	16.6	261. Neil Dougherty, TCU	42-50	14.0
11. Gary Williams, Maryland	541-306	20.0	94. Scott Nagy, So. Dak St.	220-77	22.0	178. Tony Ingle, Kennesaw State	115-64	19.2	262. Horace Broadnax, Savannah	42-88	8.4
12. Homer Drew, Valparaiso	538-335	19.2	95. Dick Davey, Santa Clara	217-164	16.7	179. Jeff Ruland, Iona	114-99	16.3	263. Jim Les, Bradley	40-49	13.3
13. John Beilein, W. Virginia	502-298	18.6	96. Blaine Taylor, Old Dom.	212-114	19.3	180. Jay Smith, Central Michigan	114-142	12.7	264. Darrin Horn, W. Kentucky	37-22	18.5
14. Ben Braun, California	499-345	17.8	97. Mark Gottfried, Alabama	211-107	21.1	181. Dave Calloway, Monmouth	111-107	13.9	265. Ben Betts, SC State	37-23	18.5
15. Pat Douglass, UC-Irvine	498-225	20.8	98. Al Walker, Binghamton	205-250	12.1	182. Houston Fancher, App. State	111-122	13.9	266. Mike Young, Wofford	37-49	12.3
16. Dick Bennett, Wash. State	478-290	17.7	99. Larry Hunter, W. Carolina	204-148	17.0	183. Mark Turgeon, Wichita State	110-96	15.7	267. Scott Drew, Baylor	37-51	12.3
17. Bo Ryan, Wisconsin	476-140	22.7	100. Phil Martelli, St. Joe's	203-111	20.3	184. Bobby Gonzalez, Manhattan	109-66	18.2	268. John Pelphrey, So Alabama	36-48	12.0
18. Rick Byrd, Belmont	473-273	19.7	101. Ronnie Arow, TAM-CC	202-169	15.5	185. Larry Davis, Furman	109-126	13.6	269. Steve Shields, ALR	35-22	17.5
19. Roy Williams, UNC	470-116	27.6	102. Mike Brey, Notre Dame	201-108	20.1	186. Tim O'Toole, Fairfield	103-101	14.7	270. Clifford Reed, B-Cookman	35-64	8.8
20. Rick Pitino, Louisville	449-159	23.6	103. Matt Kilcullen, N. Florida	199-237	12.4	187. Kyle Macy, Morehead State	102-121	12.8	271. Bob Burton, Fullerton	32-28	16.0
21. Kelvin Sampson, Okla.	435-248	19.8	104. Greg McDermott, UNI	198-117	18.0	188. Scott Sutton, Oral Roberts	100-79	16.7	272. Bart Lundy, High Point	32-29	16.0
22. Pat Kennedy, Towson	421-335	16.8	105. Jay Wright, Villanova	198-139	18.0	189. Mike MacDonald, Canisius	99-133	12.4	273. Will Brown, Albany	32-72	8.0
23. Dave Bike, Sacred Heart	416-371	15.4	106. Ben Howland, UCLA	197-127	17.9	190. Emmett Davis, Colgate	98-100	14.0	274. Paul Biancardi, Wright State	29-29	14.5
24. Danny Nee, Duquesne	407-357	16.3	107. Rob Evans, Ariz. State	194-184	14.9	191. Jim Yarbrough, SE La	97-42	19.4	275. Chris Lowery, So. Illinois	27-8	27.0
25. Don Maestri, Troy State	397-262	17.3	108. Kermit Davis, Mid Tenn	189-112	18.9	192. Trent Johnson, Stanford	97-87	16.2	276. Matt Painter, Purdue	25-5	25.0
26. Stew Morrill, Utah State	385-192	20.3	109. Willis Wilson, Rice	188-187	14.5	193. Mike Davis, Indiana	96-67	19.2	277. Mark Fox, Nevada	25-7	25.0
27. Vann Pettaway, Ala. A&M	384-181	20.2	110. Brad Holland, San Diego	187-181	14.4	194. Mark Slonaker, Mercer	95-134	11.8	278. Jeff Bzdelik, Air Force	25-31	12.5
28. Duane Rebooul, B'ham So.	383-115	23.9	111. Jerry Wainwright, DePaul	186-144	16.9	195. Joe DeSantis, Quinnipiac	92-157	10.2	279. Joe Jones, Columbia	22-32	11.0
29. Tony Shaver, Wm & Mary	373-163	20.7	112. Tim Welsh, Providence	185-121	18.5	196. Mike Adras, No. Arizona	90-83	15.0	280. Kevin Jones, Chicago State	21-51	7.0
30. Mike Deane, Wagner	369-253	17.6	113. Bill Evans, Southern Utah	183-189	14.1	197. Randy Duntton, Liberty	88-86	14.7	281. Robert Lee, La-Lafayette	20-11	20.0
31. Gary Garner, SE Mo. St.	366-277	16.6	114. Glen Miller, Brown	178-140	14.8	198. Ernie Nestor, Elon	88-122	12.6	281. John Shulman, Chattanooga	20-11	20.0
32. Rick Barnes, Texas	363-203	20.2	115. Scott Sanderson, Lipscom	176-110	19.6	199. John Thompson III, Gtown	87-55	17.4	283. Chris Mooney, Richmond	18-12	18.0
33. Tom Green, F. Dickinson	358-280	16.3	116. Tim Miles, No Dak St	176-112	17.6	200. Mike Miller, Eastern Ill.	87-79	14.5	284. Larry Krystkowiak, Montana	18-13	18.0
34. Dave Odom, South Caro.	355-229	18.7	117. Ron Hunter, IUPUI	173-148	15.7	201. Mike McConathy, NW State	87-94	14.5	285. Samuel West, Alcorn State	18-40	9.0
35. Greg Kampe, Oakland	349-255	16.6	118. Gary Stewart, UC-Davis	171-145	14.3	202. Dereck Whittenburg, F'ham	86-88	14.3	286. Sean Miller, Xavier	17-12	17.0
36. Tubby Smith, Kentucky	343-120	24.5	119. Bruce Weber, Illinois	166-63	23.7	203. Dwight Freeman, Norfolk St.	85-111	12.1	287. Milan Brown, Mt St. Mary's	17-39	8.5
37. Bob Thomason, Pacific	338-240	16.1	120. Buzz Peterson, Cstl Caro	166-109	18.4	204. Todd Lickliter, Butler	82-41	20.5	288. Frank Haith, Miami	16-13	16.0
38. Jim Larranaga, G.Mason	337-266	16.0	121. Eddie McCarter, UT-Arl	165-195	12.7	205. Louis Orr, Seton Hall	82-68	16.4	289. Jimmy Tubbs, SMU	14-14	14.0
39. Richard Scruggs, G-Webb	336-245	17.7	122. Paul Hewitt, Georgia Tech	162-93	20.3	206. Porter Moser, Illinois State	81-66	16.2	290. Ted Woodward, Maine	14-15	14.0
40. Lon Kruger, UNLV	335-247	17.6	123. Joe Cravens, Weber State	161-123	16.1	207. David Henderson, Delaware	76-72	15.2	291. Derek Thomas, W. Illinois	14-42	7.0
41. Ron Mitchell, Coppin St.	318-243	16.7	124. Rick Zvosec, Mo.-KC	161-205	12.4	208. Butch Beard, Morgan State	76-145	9.5	292. Sergio Rouco, Florida Int'l	13-17	13.0
42. Bruce Pearl, Tennessee	317-84	24.4	125. Bill Carmody, NW	160-105	17.8	209. Matt Doherty, Florida Atl.	75-58	18.8	293. Mike Garland, Clev. State	13-42	6.5
43. Bobby Lutz, Charlotte	316-172	19.8	126. Tim Carter, UTSA	160-151	14.5	210. James Jones, Yale	75-92	12.5	294. Robert Davenport, UTPA	12-16	12.0
44. Dave Loos, Austin Peay	315-263	16.6	127. Mark Few, Gonzaga	159-37	26.5	211. Doug Oliver, Idaho State	75-120	10.7	295. Van Holt, Ark-Pine Bluff	12-71	4.0
45. Riley Wallace, Hawaii	314-268	15.7	128. Ricardo Patton, Colorado	157-130	15.7	212. Dave Leitao, Virginia	74-73	14.8	296. Matt Brady, Marist	11-17	11.0
46. Mike Gillespie, Fla. A&M	312-118	20.8	129. Ron Everhart, N'eastern	155-161	14.1	213. Stan Heath, Arkansas	69-55	17.3	297. Randy Monroe, Md-BC	11-19	11.0
47. John Calipari, Memphis	308-126	23.7	130. James Flint, Drexel	154-121	17.1	214. Dennis Nutt, Texas State	69-72	13.8	298. Terry Dunn, Dartmouth	10-17	10.0
48. Jim Crews, Army	308-276	15.4	131. Paul Wertz, Pepperdine	153-79	21.9	215. Randy Bennett, St. Mary's	68-56	17.0	299. Norm Roberts, St. John's	9-18	9.0
49. John Giannini, La Salle	303-168	18.9	132. Tic Price, McNeese State	153-108	13.9	216. Bobby Jones, St. Fran (Pa.)	67-99	11.2	300. Billy Lange, Navy	9-19	9.0
50. Rob Spivery, Southern	303-280	15.2	133. Stan Joplin, Toledo	153-112	17.0	217. Joe Scott, Princeton	66-76	13.2	301. Anthony Solomon, St. Bona.	9-47	4.5
51. Dana Altman, Creighton	301-187	18.8	134. Don Monson, Minnesota	152-103	19.0	218. Mike Anderson, UAB	65-34	21.7	302. Jerry Eaves, NC A&T	9-49	4.5
52. Cy Alexander, Tenn. St.	298-240	16.6	135. Gary Waters, Rutgers	152-121	16.9	219. Robert McCullum, So. Fla.	65-81	13.0	303. Mike Burns, E. Washington	8-20	8.0
53. Royce Waltman, Ind. St.	297-216	18.5	136. Lorenzo Romar, Wash.	151-123	16.8	220. Bret Campbell, Tenn-Martin	65-106	10.8	304. J.P. Piper, Nicholls State	6-21	6.0
54. Jim Woodriddle, Kan. St.	297-224	16.5	137. Eddie Biedenbach, UNCA	151-189	12.6	221. Jim Christian, Kent State	64-31	21.3	305. Dean Keener, J. Madison	6-22	6.0
55. Bob Williams, UCSB	296-197	18.5	138. Fran O'Hanlon, Lafayette	150-136	15.0	222. Karl Hobbs, G. Washington	64-53	16.0	305. Jimmy Patsos, Loyola-Md	6-22	6.0
56. Danny Kasper, SF. Austin	295-116	21.1	139. Dickey Nutt, Ark. State	150-137	15.0	223. Johnny Jones, North Texas	64-80	12.8	307. Mike Gillian, Longwood	6-52	3.0
57. Jim Whitesell, Loyola-III.	291-211	16.2	140. Rick Stansbury, Miss. St.	149-75	21.3	224. Reggie Witherspoon, Buffalo	64-107	10.7	308. Robbie Laing, Campbell	5-49	2.5
58. Fran Dunphy, Penn	290-154	18.1	141. Jessie Evans, USF	149-95	18.6	225. Tom Herrion, Charleston	63-27	21.0	309. Larry Lessett, Maryland-ES	2-26	2.0
59. Al Skinner, BC	285-226	16.8	142. Pat Dennis, The Citadel	148-212	11.4	226. Mike LaPlante, J'ville St	63-81	12.6	— Dugger Baucom, VMI	—	—
60. Oliver Purnell, Clemson	282-225	16.6	143. Doc Sadler, UTEP	147-47	24.5	227. Tim O'Shea, Ohio U.	62-58	15.5	— Ken Bone, Portland State	—	—
61. Kirk Speraw, C. Florida	277-184	17.3	144. Ray Giacoletti, Utah	146-89	18.3	228. Jeff Capel, VCU	60-31	20.0	— Tommy Dempsey, Rider	—	—
62. Larry Eustachy, So. Miss	271-162	19.4	145. Jimmy Collins, Ill-Chi	146-123	16.2	229. Brad Soderberg, Saint Louis	60-58	15.0	— Dave Dickerson, Tulane	—	—
63. Pat Flannery, Bucknell	267-189	16.7	146. Barry Hinson, Mo. State	144-104	18.0	230. Monte Towe, New Orleans	60-59	15.0	— Orlando Early, La-Monroe	—	—
64. Frank Sullivan, Harvard	267-301	12.7	147. Bobby Braswell, Northridge	143-123	15.9	231. Terry Carroll, Denver	59-59	14.8	— Dane Fife, IUPUIFW	—	—
65. Steve Alford, Iowa	266-160	19.0	148. Gregg Marshall, Winthrop	142-70	20.3	232. Brad Brownell, UNCW	58-32	19.3	— Rob Flaska, Centenary	—	—
66. Barry Collier, Nebraska	266-209	16.7	149. Murrey Bartow, E Tenn St	140-108	15.5	233. Ronnie Courtney, Texas So.	55-59	13.8	— Darrell Hawkins, Pr. View	—	—
67. Steve Fisher, SD State	265-179	17.7	150. Fran McCaffery, Siena	139-126	15.4	234. Tom Pecora, Hofstra	55-65	13.8	— Gil Jackson, Howard	—	—
68. Bob McKillop, Davidson	262-202	16.4	151. Steve Cleveland, Fres St	138-108	17.3	235. Larry Wright, Grambling	55-115	9.2	— Lewis Jackson, Alabama State	—	—
69. Mike Calipari, UNCG	260-243	14.4	152. Howie Dickenman, CConn	138-122	15.3	236. Larry Harrison, Hartford	54-92	10.8	— Rob Jeter, UW-Milwaukee	—	—
70. Jim Baron, Rhode Island	260-269	14.4	153. Jim Ferry, Long Island	135-72	19.2	237. Ron Jirsa, Marshall	53-69	13.3	— Andy Kennedy, Cincinnati	—	—
71. Skip Prosser, Wake Forest	259-113	21.6	154. Dan Dakich, Bowling Green	134-101	16.8	238. Greg Graham, Boise State	52-44	17.3	— Brian Nash, St. Francis (N.Y.)	—	—
72. Ralph Willard, Holy Cross	258-192	17.2	155. Tim Buckley, Ball State	133-121	14.8	239. Jamie Dixon, Pitt	51-14	25.5	— George Nessman, SJ State	—	—
73. Bill Self, Kansas	254-121	21.2	156. Ritchie McKay, New Mexico	133-128	14.8	240. Mike Sutton, Tenn. Tech	51-38	17.0	— Jeff Neubauer, E. Kentucky	—	—
74. Mike Lonergan, Vermont	251-88	20.9	157. Tommy Amaker, Michigan	132-115	16.5	241. Billy Gillispie, Texas A&M	51-42	17.0	— Steve Pikiell, Stony Brook	—	—
75. Charlie Coles, Miami	249-199	16.6	158. Larry Reynolds, LB State	131-98	16.4	242. Derek Waugh, Stetson	51-76	10.2	— Barclay Radebaugh, Ch. So.	—	—
76. Leonard Hamilton, Fla. St.	245-258	14.4	159. T. Anderson, Jackson St.	130-86	18.6	243. K. Bromley, Cal Poly-SLO	51-76	10.2	— Charles Ramsey, E. Michigan	—	—
77. Seth Greenberg, Va Tech	244-198	16.3	160. Wayne Morgan, Iowa State	130-109	16.3	244. Byron Samuels, Radford	51-88	10.2	— Dave Rose, BYU	—	—
78. Tim Floyd, USC	243-130	20.3	161. Jeff Lebo, Auburn	129-80	18.4	245. Jerome Jenkins, Sac State	51-89	10.2	— Jerry Slocum, Youngstown St.	—	—
79. Greg Jackson, Dela. State	242-146	17.3	162. Jimmy Tillette, Samford	1							

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Missouri's recruitment of Morrison was quite a pick-up

Junior Colleges

Tony Jimenez



Notes, quotes and other short shots with the season underway ...

Some folks say that Redlands, Okla., star Ty Morrison is overrated. Yeah, right, and Charles Barkley is shy and quiet when the TV cameras roll. And the players in the NBA love the new dress code, too. Redlands coach Steve Eck – who sent Taj Gray to Oklahoma two years ago – says Morrison is the real deal, and Missouri agrees.

“The one thing he can really do well is guard,” said Eck of Morrison, who has orally committed to Missouri. “He’s tall (6-foot-7), long, quick and energetic.”

Morrison came to Redlands as an unsure 195-pounder but leaves at a confident 220 pounds. A little karma sent him to Missouri. After tiring of coaches making their pitch via the telephone late last summer, Morrison said he wasn’t going to take any more calls.

Still, he answered his phone one time thinking it was a buddy. Instead, it was Missouri coach Quin Snyder.

The rest, as they say, is history.

Barkley, by the way, will have to scoot over a seat on the TNT set if Morrison has his way. Morrison is going to Missouri in part because he wants to major in TV/journalism and become a broadcaster.

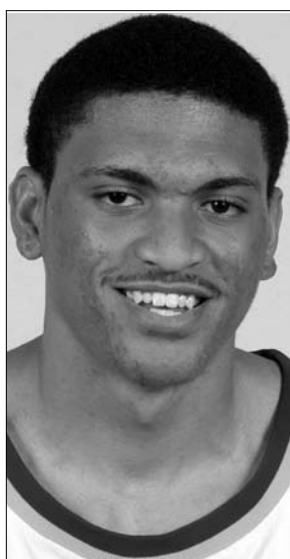
• While Morrison is Redlands’ present, Gray is Redlands’ past. The OU standout is primed for a big season that should only elevate his position in the NBA draft.

“First of all, Taj has the parents (Steve and Brenda) who really support him,” Eck said. “They got involved with him and pushed him. Their first concern was to be sure he got his grades and he took care of that.

“I always tell the guys that God has a way of evening things out. If you’re short, you sometimes get a lot of heart, and if you’re tall, sometimes you don’t. Taj is one of those guys who has a lot of heart and who’s tall (6-9).”

• Oklahoma Coach Kelvin Sampson has long had some major mojo working when he recruits juco players. But Oklahoma State Sean Sutton’s team’s going to be intriguing with former juco stars Mario Boggan (Chipola, Fla.), Jamaal Brown (Dixie State, Utah) and Torre Johnson (Garden City, Kan.) in the fold. That’s one of the most talented trio of juco catches in one swoop by a four-year school in recent years.

• While schools in the National JC Athletic Association get a good share of the limelight nationally, let’s not forget California. For the past three seasons, Fresno City coach Vance Walberg has been the mastermind behind one of the most prolific programs in the USA’s two-year school ranks. In that span, the Rams have amassed a 100-5 record (34-0 last season, the first team since 1970 to go undefeated in California) by averaging 104.8, 107.5 and



Ty Morrison

104 points a game during those seasons, respectively, and it has resulted in a pair of state tournament appearances, including a state championship last season.

“As to the notion of all offense and no defense,” said Walberg, “ask our opponents how they prepared for us. The key is to get good kids who love the game, who have a passion for it.”

Naturally, the Rams average about 35 3-point attempts per game, and a beginning-to-end press is involved in Fresno City’s game.

The latest Fresno City team includes a player with a familiar last name, 6-3 Keena Payton, whose older brother Gary is with the Miami Heat.

• Globe, N.Y., is the new Beast in the East, and with good reason. In late November, coach Ken Wilcox’s crew will play two games on the same day and three in two days in two states. The New Yorkers will host Erie, N.Y., on their home court (Pace U. in Manhattan), and then later in the day might play in the championship game of the Morris County, N.J. Thanksgiving tournament. From the end of first game to the start of the second game, there’s only a three-hour span.

Oh, the day before that, Globe plays Dean, Mass. at 3 p.m. home in a first-round game of the tourney.

“We had a glitch in our schedule, where we had two commitments on the same day,” Wilcox said. “We have been working closely with Morris on making sure their tournament runs smoothly and also that we keep our commitment to Erie, which is coming from a long distance to play and experience New York City. Instead of making someone unhappy, we will take it upon ourselves to meet our commitments and to try and play quality basketball in the process.”

• Nolan Richardson, the grandson of the legendary former coach at Arkansas of the same name, might not have realized it, but when he played on the Hutchinson, Kans., Sports Arena floor on the night of Nov. 5, it was deja vu of sorts. Twenty-five years ago, Nolan Richardson coached Western Texas to a NJCAA tournament title at Hutchinson and then was named the head coach at Tulsa.

The younger Richardson and his Northern Oklahoma teammates fell to Hutchinson, 73-70, in overtime, but Jets’ coach Greg Shamburg says four-year school coaches need to check out Richardson.

“I think some coaches are afraid to recruit him, thinking, ‘Whew, he’s a Hall of Famer’s grandson,’” Shamburg said. “At times, he tries to do a little too much, but he’s one of the best kids I’ve ever had.”

Shamburg hopes to give Richardson, who redshirted last season, a chance to play three Division I seasons.

FORMER JC PLAYERS IN THE NBA

(Sweet 16 players of significance)

Player	JC	NBA team
Rafer Alston	Fresno City, Calif.	Rockets
Reggie Evans	Coffeyville, Kan.	Sonics
Steve Francis	Allegheny & San Jacinto	Magic
Stephen Jackson	Butler County, Kan.	Pacers
Shawn Marion	Vincennes, Ind.	Suns
Jamaal Tinsley	Mt. San Antonio, Calif.	Pacers
Ben Wallace	Cuyahoga, Ohio	Pistons
Tony Allen	Butler County & Wabash Valley	Celtics
Rafael Araujo	Arizona Western	Raptors
Sam Cassell	San Jacinto, Texas	Clippers
Bobby Jackson	Western Nebraska	Grizzlies
Lee Nailon	Butler County	76ers
Jannergo Pargo	Neosho County, Kan.	Bulls
Ruben Patterson	Independence, Kan.	Trail Blazers
Latrell Sprewell	Three Rivers, Mo.	Free agent
Nick Van Exel	Trinity Valley, Texas	Spurs

• WANTED: Good juco players. OK, so every two-year school is looking for them, but many, such as South-western, Ill., are picky.

“We want good juco prospects who want an education,” said coach Jay Harrington. “We have eight kids who are qualifiers this year. We thrive on that type of player.”

• Mike Jeffers of Johnson County, Kan., is another coach who is big on academics. Jeffers is in his 15th season at Johnson County, the longest tenure

of any coach in the Kansas Jayhawk Conference.

For years, Johnson County has been considered the Harvard of the JC ranks, given its stiff academics.

“One thing beyond the wins that I am proud of is the fact that nearly 90 per cent of our players that have signed with four-year schools have achieved a bachelor’s degree,” Jeffers said. “We feel like they are really well prepared once they leave Johnson County to compete athletically and academically.”

• Seward County, Kan., coach Dave Brown is only 17 wins shy of becoming the Saints’ winningest coach ever. He most likely will reach that plateau by season’s end. Opening the 2005-06 campaign, Brown had a 208-87 record in nine seasons at Seward County, second only to Dale Reed (224-168 from 1983-96).

• The Top 10 in the pre-season NJCAA poll: 1. Arkansas-Fort Smith 2. Chipola, Fla. 3. Indian Hills, Iowa 4. College of Southern Idaho 5. Coffeyville, Kans. 6. Coastal Georgia 7. Southeastern, Ill. 8. San Jacinto, Texas 9. Three Rivers, Mo. 10. Cochise, Ariz.

Arkansas-Fort Smith, a two-year school athletically, but a four-year school academically, also was the No. 1 pick by Street & Smith’s magazine.

Those high expectations have changed the look and feel of his team’s season, says second-year coach Jeremy Cox.

“Players and coaches make reference and then go on, but there is no question it puts a bull’s-eye on your back,” Cox said. “There’s just an aura to it. Things just change. They are definitely different.”

• The NJCAA double-elimination Division I tournament at the Hutchinson, Kan. Sports Arena is March 21-25. The DII tourney is March 22-25 in Danville, Ill.

Buzzer beater: “There is a lot of attention given to junior college programs and coaches relative to recruiting. I think what is under-valued sometimes is the level of coaching in many junior colleges.” — Texas Tech assistant coach Chris Beard.

Tony Jimenez has been covering junior colleges longer than anyone in America.



Tarleton, Bentley among D-IIs making names at D-I's expense

Chuck Mistovich

College Division

We think it's really a stretch when Division II schools decide to hop into the Division I ranks and think they can compete, even at the mid-major level. Most of those Division I wannabes struggle for a winning record, even after a decade in the majors, and we're not talking making the NCAA Tournament ... just winning double-digits is tough.

But the Division II's can dream, and sometimes they can really hit it big in their one or two games against majors. Such was the case in early November, with the expansion of exhibition games permitted against Division I schools. The Division II programs really benefited.

Tarleton, ranked No. 1 in all the pre-season NCAA II polls, looked the part of a champion in its two Division I exhibitions, beating Lamar, 65-62, and sticking with New Orleans most of the way until falling off the pace in a 78-61 loss.

Basketball Times' seventh-ranked Bentley (Mass.) looked mighty fine in its 82-76 upset of Northeastern, and sixth-ranked Montevallo (Ala.) ran off with a 76-65 win over Jackson State. Montevallo certainly played New Orleans tougher than Tarleton did, falling 89-88.

Not all the top DIIs did as well, as we look at a scoreboard showing clean sweeps by the DI schools: Maryland over defending Division II champ Virginia Union, 89-59; UNC-Wilmington 103, Mount Olive 58; North Carolina State 97, Mount Olive 56; Austin Peay 94, Central Missouri State 90; Charlotte 84, Pfeiffer 67; Purdue 94, Pfeiffer 80; North Carolina 89, Catawba 63; Bethune-Cookman 78, Lynn 66.

The Great Lakes Valley Conference, long considered by far the best conference in Division II basketball, appeared to give up some bragging rights to the Northeast 10 Conference, which had four or five teams in and out of the national top 20. It looks like more of the same this season, as four NE10s are Top 25 teams.

But you've got to give the GLVC a bravo in the exhibition games against the majors. Southern Indiana might be much better than BT's No. 11-ranking. Former Southern Indy head coach Bruce Pearl invited the Screaming Eagles to his new home at Tennessee, and Indy scared the heck out of the Vols in their 86-78 win. Coach Rick Herdes' team grabbed a five-point lead with 10 minutes to play, but turnovers allowed Tennessee back in and to eventually win.

Other Great Lakes Valley teams really showing their stuff against major universities were Saint Joseph's, with a 74-73 upset over Illinois-Chicago, and Bellarmine (losing by seven to Louisville and by six to Murray State), Rockhurst (losing by eight to Nevada) and Saint Joseph's again (losing by seven to IUPUI), Southern Illinois-Edwardsville (losing to Purdue by six).

Southern Indy has to be the most impressive Division II school in the early going. Besides the close call with Tennessee, Southern has since gone on to rack up the

championship in the prestigious Disney Tournament with three straight wins. Indy will be a force this season. Tarleton, are you listening?

At Disney, SI blew past Caldwell (N.J.), 88-71, in the first round. Then came a 76-71 win over Top-20 Nebraska-Omaha. It was a struggle in the championship game, but the Screaming Eagles took a 90-86 win over Columbus (Ga.) State.



Chris Thompson

Chris Thompson is playing like one of the top players in Division II basketball, opening with 22.7 ppg and 12.3 rebounds per game during this 3-0 start. Those figures blow past the 6-foot-6 senior's 11.3 points and 9.2 rebounds per game last season. The other top shows for Indy so far are 6-0 Melvin Hall (14.7 ppg), 6-0 David Bryant (12.3 ppg) and 6-6 Keith Christmas (10.7 ppg, 5.3 rpg).

The guy who should really take off soon is 6-6 transfer Nick Brooks of Butler, who has averaged 8.3 ppg so far. "Nick is a tremendous athlete who can get to the basketball and score and is an impact player at this level," Herdes said.

"We just gave out there at the end of the game," said Columbus State coach Herbert Greene. "They were still fairly fresh because they played a lot of players and their big guys just wore us down in the paint. That is one of the premiere teams in the country."

Tarleton also looked mighty darned tough in its upset of Lamar. Tarleton, which had entertained thoughts of applying for Division I, held a 16-point lead late in the game before Lamar made a final run. "For our team to come in here and win was a great start," said Tarleton coach Lonnie Reisman. "We played some Division I teams to play some strong competition." Tarleton held Lamar to nearly 20 points under last season's scoring average.

Tarleton outscored New Orleans in the second half, but the Texans had as much as a 30-point deficit in the first half. John Davis led Tarleton in scoring in both exhibition games with 16 ppg.

The other really strong Division II performance against a major was by Bentley in its six-point win over Northeastern, which was 21-10 season last season. All-American Tim Forbes led the Falcons with 19 points and five rebounds.

Montevallo made quite a statement in its split with two majors in the exhibitions. The club's two All-Americans looked great, as Marcus Kennedy averaged 18 points and James Hall averaged 20. But the big show came from Greg Brown, who pumped in 27 and 18 points.

Central Missouri State might be even better than its No. 10 ranking, if it can play like it did in a four-point loss to Austin Peay. A 13-4 run by the Mules brought the club within 88-87 with 39 seconds to play, but fouls helped AP hang on for the win. "They felt terrible," said Central coach Kim Anderson. "They wanted to win this basketball game, but I think we got so much out of this. This video will be a great teaching tool for us." Anderson, who brought in

eight recruits to join the seven veterans from last year's 24-7 team, really took it out on Hannibal-LaGrange (Mo.) in the regular-season opener with a 92-61 win.

No. 9 Pfeiffer (N.C.) pretty much held its own until late-game failures against Charlotte and Purdue. "We were playing Pfeiffer basketball at its finest for about 25 minutes and controlling tempo and getting great shots," said Pfeiffer coach Dave Davis. "The game got much more physical in the last 15 minutes and it was not to our advantage." Pfeiffer led 60-45 with 17 minutes to play and simply wore down in the stretch.

Mount Olive bit off way too much in its two exhibition games, losing to Wilmington and North Carolina State by over 40 points each game. But, just imagine this Top-10 Division II club going up against the Wolfpack, with 9,276 crazy fans getting on the little guys. "We won't see any big men during the regular season like we saw tonight against N.C. State," Mount Olive player Victor Young said. "And the Wolfpack fans really get into it. If you can play in front of these fans, you can play anywhere."

The Carolina Virginia Conference could be pretty tough this season, at least if you consider that Mount Olive and Pfeiffer are nationally-ranked top-10 teams. In the league's pre-season poll, Mount Olive nosed out Pfeiffer, thanks to heavy returns from its Elite Eight, 29-5 team.

Do you think the major university teams care about these exhibition games against Division II schools? You bet. In fact, the Northeast 10 Conference's Saint Rose (N.Y.) gave Syracuse all it could handle in an 86-73 decision before 6,635 fans. Orange coach Jim Boeheim was ejected for picking up his second technical foul just before the end of the first half. Boeheim, booted out of the game in the first 20 minutes against an Division II school?

"There were a couple of flagrant hits and (the officials) did not want to call the game," Boeheim said. "I wanted to get the first technical, and then I said, 'OK' and I was throw out." He said of Saint Rose, "I like their team. They had good movement and tested us in some things."

Saint Rose coach Brian Beaury said, "We may not be able to beat them because they are so much taller, but it gives us a chance to work and adjust against a great program."

Here's a look at some other interesting games against Division I programs:

Catawba lost to North Carolina, 89-63, but was within 43-39 late in the first half.

Two of the finest Division III teams had highly respected performances in exhibition games against major-university teams. No. 1 ranked Illinois Wesleyan played even with the Big 10's Illinois before the Illini pulled away the final 15 minutes for an 82-60 win. Titan All-Americans Keelan Amelianovich and Adam Dauksas each had 13 points. Division III Wisconsin-Stout was in the game all the way in a 69-65 loss to Wisconsin-Green Bay.

Chuck Mistovich joined Larry Donald as a writer for Basketball Weekly and became a columnist for Basketball Times when it was purchased by Donald in 1980.

Some headlines to watch as the NBA's drama unfolds



Joe Kyriakoza

In the world of print journalism, headline writers have more fun. Let's face it, us guys who stare at a computer screen for hours trying to come up with interesting material for you to consume have no life. It's those gifted few who come up with the stuff in bold black ink at the top of the page that get to come up with one witty line and then enjoy the rest of their day.

After one month of basketball, you could read many of those clever headlines around the NBA and need not go further, because the obvious has occurred; they are headlines that could have been written before the season started. Then again, some of the more surprising headlines have made for some interesting story lines very early on, and others have soap opera-like themes that cater to the egos of many of the NBA's egomaniacs.

These headlines represent some of the more intriguing plots through one month of pro hoops:

"Clips are best in the West."

"Lake Show becomes Kobe Show."

"Brown backs Steph."

"Brown takes shot at Steph."

"Zeke denies Marbury Trade Reports."

"Boozer's condition worse than thought."

"Indiana: Championship or bust."

"Raptors can't win, Pistons can't lose."

"Walker adjusting as sub."

"Clips are best in the West." – "It's early," the Clippers' Elton Brand said after defeating Milwaukee to improve to 6-2. "It's early, but it's never happened here before, and we're excited."

So here they come, the L.A. Clippers, who maintained the best record in the Western Conference as of mid-November. No analyst south of the North Pole would have predicted this to happen. Read into it what you will – early luck, soft schedule, etc. – but some things are happening in Clip-town that aren't happening on the other side of town, namely team basketball. They even won the battle for L.A. on November 18 at the Staples Center, taking the Lakers down 97-91.

The Clippers have four players scoring in double figures, including Brand (23.3), Corey Maggette (19.5), Cuttino Mobley (16.3) and Sam Cassell (15.5). Cassell, who's enjoying a revival in L.A., is running the point for the Clippers with great success, also dishing out over eight assists per game.

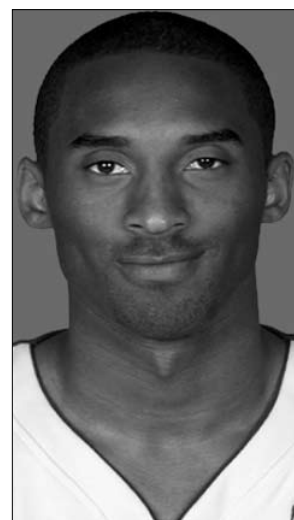
But the Clippers have teased us before. It remains to be seen whether or not this successful start is just an aberration, or a sign of things to come from the Clips.

"Lake Show becomes Kobe Show." – Not much further down the road in L.A., the Lakers had a multitude of dramatic story lines before the season began. Phil Jackson returned to the team he turned his back on only two seasons ago, and the thought of Jackson coaching Kobe Bryant again was unheard of.

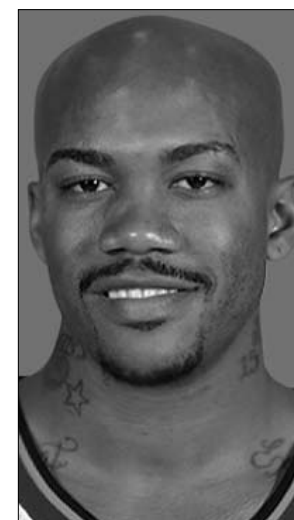
As most suspected, Bryant is leading the Lakers in scoring and taking more than twice the number of shots as the next player (Lamar Odom). Bryant was second in the league



Elton Brand



Kobe Bryant



Stephon Marbury

(31.4 ppg) as of this writing, and is playing over 40 minutes per game. His place on this team is reminiscent of a young Michael Jordan in his early years with the Bulls, when he'd put up 30-40 points in a losing cause.

"Brown backs Steph"; "Brown takes shot at Steph."; "Zeke denies Marbury Trade Reports." –OK. Anyone who follows the NBA had a feeling that the egos of Larry Brown, Isiah Thomas and Stephon Marbury would eventually outgrow Madison Square Garden. But I don't think anyone imagined it would happen in the first two weeks of the season. The Knicks kicked off the 2005-06 season by losing their first five games, definitely not the start anticipated by Thomas when he hired Brown. In those first five games, Brown never hesitated to throw out the notion that Knicks' roster is unbalanced and has various issues, essentially taking a swipe at Thomas and his personnel moves this off season. Also, during those first two weeks, Brown and Marbury aired some of their philosophical differences via the media, and Marbury trade rumors began flying around as his play deteriorated.

The most noted difference in philosophy between Brown and Marbury is that Brown wants Marbury to be a pass-first point guard, something that Marbury has never been accustomed to. Brown likes to break down his point guards and build them back up. He most recently went through the transformation with Chauncey Billups, who was also frustrated early on when Brown took shots away from him. But obviously Billups adjusted and led the Pistons to a championship playing Brown's style. Can Marbury do the same?

"Hell, yes, it's frustrating," Marbury told *Newsday* of his adjustment from scorer to playmaker. "I'm not used to playing in a game where I'm not attacking the person that's going at me. That's something different."

"If he wants me to play a different way, which I am playing a total different way, then if that's what it's going to take to win, I'm down for it. But if we lose, I'm not going to be happy with it."

I'm sure that's not the last time we'll hear about this butting of heads ... that is unless Marbury is shipped off. The Knicks' frustrations go beyond just the point-guard spot, however. They have issues across the board that need to be addressed, including a lack of production from

Jamal Crawford and Quentin Richardson and a virtually non-existent Jerome James, whom they considered an important free agent acquisition.

"Boozer's condition worse than thought." – Carlos Boozer has proven to be an eternal bust for the Utah Jazz. After the hubbub created from his departure from Cleveland two seasons ago to sign a six-year, \$68 million contract with Utah, Boozer's injury-prone nature has deemed his presence worthless thus far. His timetable for return is unknown at this point.

To add to the Jazz's issues (aside from their last place spot in the Northwest Division), Andrei Kirilenko also went down in mid-November with a sprained ankle.

"Indiana: Championship or bust."

– The Pacers have high hopes, and they feel an NBA title is in their sights, thanks to their highly talented roster and the return of Ron Artest. Last season was a debacle, with the brawl in Detroit that suspended three of their key players for extended periods (Artest for the season). The Pacers look ready and mean business. They've got depth at every position despite Reggie Miller's retirement. Rick Carlisle has this team believing they can win it all. Now they just need to go out and do it. The Pistons and Heat will have something to say about it as well.

"Raptors can't win, Pistons can't lose." – The Toronto Raptors and Detroit Pistons were at completely opposite ends of the spectrum two weeks into the season. The Pistons were 8-0 and at the top of the Central Division, while the Raptors were 0-9 and in the basement of the Atlantic.

The Raptors have a variety of frustrations that even soft-spoken second-year player Chris Bosh has publicly put his teammates to task. Six players were either traded or left for free agency this off season, and the Raptors seemingly have very little team chemistry going for them right now.

On the other hand, the Pistons look invincible despite the fact that they are running a completely new system under coach Flip Saunders. Detroit's starting five is arguably the best in the league, and they've been together for three years running. Saunders' system has opened up the offense for Richard Hamilton and Chauncey Billups, a backcourt that is becoming deadlier by the day.

While it's early for both teams, the Pistons and Raptors obviously are headed down different paths.

"Walker adjusting as sub." – Antoine Walker, one of the new wave of members of the Miami Heat, is in an unfamiliar role as a sixth man this season. Coach Stan Van Gundy is using veterans Walker and Gary Payton as a spark off the bench.

"I've just got to be ready to play," Walker told the *Miami Herald*. "I have to bring my offensive presence off the bench, I know that. I just come in trying to be aggressive."

The season is off and running, and sometimes all you need is a headline to keep up with the drama.

Joe Kyriakoza has been writing about Basketball Times for 10 years. For any comments or questions about his column, he can be reached at joekyriakoza@yahoo.com.



Oklahoma City, of all places, steps to front of line for NBA team

Mike Sheridan

NBA

PHILADELPHIA – A generation ago, the owner of a small business returned from an afternoon meeting with an executive consultant. As he took a seat behind his desk, the owner began leafing through a glossy folder filled with graphs, charts and other data describing ways his corporation could grow.

He was asked how the meeting had gone.

Looking up from behind a pair of glasses and with a furrowed brow, the owner sighed while shaking his head.

“When the consultant finished his presentation,” he said, “he asked if there were any questions. I said there was one. If you’ve got all the answers, why are you willing to sell them to me?”

With that, the folder was dropped into an overflowing waste basket.

Longtime readers probably could guess that the business in question is the one that has published *Basketball Times* for 25 years.

And while the late Larry Donald appreciated statistics, he realized their limits, especially when it came to running his own company.

It’s a lesson the leaders of the National Basketball Association are learning yet again in the fall of 2005.

Not more than four months ago, the notion of Oklahoma City as an appealing venue for an NBA franchise would have sounded like the product of some hometown promoter’s vivid imagination.

Why?

Well, the demographics said so.

Foremost among those numbers is the fact that Oklahoma City does not rank among the Top 25 television markets in America. Conventional wisdom holds that this means that, in terms of Madison Avenue, the place does not exist.

The rest of the data flowed from there and raised apparently serious questions. Would the community embrace the NBA? Were there enough corporate dollars to sustain a 21st century entry in the league? Could a decent local television and radio package be created?

In short, there were plenty of seemingly solid reasons to think that Oklahoma City was no place for the NBA.

Six weeks into its hastily arranged blind date with the league courtesy of Hurricane Katrina, the great majority of those concerns have been proven baseless. Fans have poured through the turnstiles of the Ford Center to watch the temporarily (?) transplanted New Orleans Hornets host contests there. With little advance notice, the franchise ranks sixth in season ticket sales this season.

No wonder commissioner David Stern was smiling upon a recent visit to Oklahoma City, while making no promises about the franchise’s return to New Orleans.

All of it should be a reminder that, when it comes to finding homes for professional basketball organizations, there is no formula. And those who lean too heavily on the reams of data instead of their instincts can wind up with an unwelcome number of problem children.

Oklahoma City is merely the latest example of the

phenomenon.

Indeed, some of the current hot spots in the league were once viewed as rural outposts, incapable of sustaining a modern professional sports franchise.

When the Kings reached Sacramento in 1985, they were on their fourth city in 14 years (Cincinnati, Kansas City and Omaha). Unlike Cincinnati and Kansas City, the California state capital had never sustained a major professional sports franchise, let alone one as poorly managed as the Kings were then.

Two decades later, Arco Arena is widely considered to be among the most difficult road venues in the league. The Kings became a Western power, even if their run appears to be ebbing in 2005-06.

In 1976, when the NBA absorbed four teams from the old American Basketball Association there were serious

Although it is logical to wonder about a city that has never been home to a major pro sports organization, league history underscores that this might be Oklahoma City’s single most attractive quality. A new town has not been jaded by years of shoddy management or sub-par facilities. Citizens are only too eager to embrace something that gives their city a sporting identity.

doubts about whether either San Antonio or Indiana could support a strong franchise in the long term. Yet, each spot has more than held up its end of the bargain and, today, both organizations are among the sport’s elite.

It works on the flip side as well.

NBA types were only too quick to congratulate themselves in 1988 when Orlando was granted an expansion franchise. With the boom in the population of central Florida, the attraction of Disney World and its identity as a tourist stop seemed to portend only sunny skies for the Magic. Yet, these days, Orlando is trying to figure out ways to get a new arena financed, and there are already some who fear without it the Magic might one day be forced to pick up roots.

As for New Orleans, it was probably the least stable of any of the league’s 30 teams before the hurricane ravaged the Gulf Coast. Owner George Shinn brought the Hornets there over the deep reservations of NBA headquarters in large part because Charlotte had grown exasperated with his stewardship and refused to address the matter of a new facility. New Orleans Arena was barely adequate by current league standards and it didn’t help that the Hornets sank to the depths of the league in 2004-05.

To its credit, Oklahoma City has proved worthy of consideration for reasons beyond its robust economic support of the Hornets. Its civic leaders have been exceptionally sensitive and taken pains to illustrate that their goal is not to pirate the Hornets from wounded New

Orleans, a marked contrast to the shameless huckstering that San Antonio officials have employed in their efforts to make a home for the NFL’s Saints.

Stern and friends are too smart to venture into that public-relations folly. All they have acknowledged is that Oklahoma City has impressed them and that it is now in play as a future league venue. The best guess is that the league will take its time on this one. New Orleans has enormous issues before it that far outweigh the matter of its pro basketball franchise. It might be 2-3 years before the fate of the Hornets can be reasonably determined.

While that remains to be settled, the NBA is fortunate to have identified such an eager and attractive potential business partner.

As it turns out, Oklahoma City has much to offer the NBA. It fits neatly into a growing geographic footprint of the Southwest United States. Natural Western Conference rivalries with Dallas and Houston could create a new twist in a part of the country where establishing intense rivalries has never been simple due to the great travel distances between major cities in that part of the nation.

Then there is the matter of becoming Oklahoma City’s “first.” Although it is logical to wonder about a city that has never been home to a major pro sports organization, league history underscores that this might be its single most attractive quality. Unlike other communities, a new town has not been jaded by years of shoddy management or sub-par facilities. Citizens are only too eager to embrace something that they believe gives their city a new

sporting identity.

Consider the trails the NBA has blazed in years past. We have already mentioned Sacramento, Indianapolis and San Antonio. Portland, another “first timer,” was a model NBA franchise until questionable personnel decisions in recent years fractured that bond. Few doubt that it won’t be rekindled if the Blazers rebound.

If nothing else, Oklahoma City now gives Stern one of a commissioner’s most valuable commodities: leverage. With Stern on record as stating that he does not foresee expansion beyond the current roster of 30 teams any time soon, civic leaders in other locales must now view it as a viable option for cranky owners. Four months ago, there were no such trump cards in the league’s hand.

In fact, you could make the case that the best thing for the NBA would be a return of the Hornets to a healthy New Orleans while Oklahoma City is left “warming up in the bullpen,” ready to welcome a franchise whose bond with another city has frayed.

Clearly, Oklahoma City has proven itself worthy.

The guess here is that somewhere beneath the NBA’s Olympic Tower, a large dumpster sits full, overflowing with charts and graphics about a certain city’s unsuitability for expansion.

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