

Sports

Hickory Connection

By FLASH GORDON
Sports Ghost-Writer

When Jason Petty and David Bruce battled each other in the Hickory prep ranks it was no secret that they were heated rivals.

Petty was a star for St. Stephens, while Bruce was a star at Fred T. Foard. Both were named to the All Big 6 Conference team their senior year and both averaged over 21 points a

game.

Now the duo room together at Montreat-Anderson College and they call themselves the Hickory Connection on the Cavaliers' basketball team.

When Montreat-Anderson opened the second half of its season against Brevard Junior College Petty started at point-guard, while Bruce was the shooting guard. The Cavaliers nipped

Brevard 82-80. Both men turned in impressive performances and they are now called double trouble.

Bruce, making his first start ever in college basketball, nailed four three-pointers and finished with a game-high 20 points. Meanwhile, Petty was nothing short of sensational. The 6-4 sophomore scored 14 points, pulled down seven rebounds, was six-of-seven from the free throw line, had four assists and four steals.

With the game on the line Petty turned in a sparkling defensive gem. With seven seconds left stole the inbound pass. He was fouled immediately. With four seconds left Petty converted a one-and-one situation and that put the game on ice.

"It was a great win," Petty said. "It goes to show that hard work pays off. I feel good when I play hard and we win. I know my points will come and my game will come. If another player has a better shot I let him have it because winning as a team is so important to me."

As for Bruce, the freshman was coming off being on academic probation. "It was really and honor to be able to start my first game," Bruce said. "Coach (Steve) McNamara to us before the game against Brevard was going to be tough. He told us that we had to pickup the scoring slack and I am glad we were able to do it."

In back-to-back games played against Columbia Junior College and Louisburg College over last weekend, both Bruce and Petty stole the show once again as the Cavaliers upped



Photo by Steve Walker

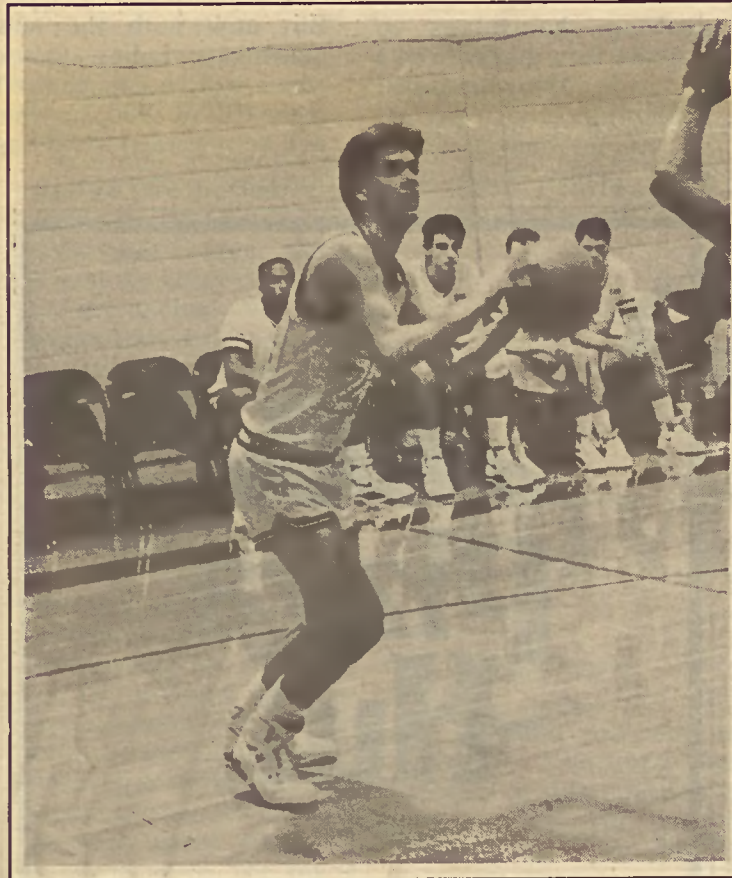


Photo by Steve Walker

their record to 15-6.

Against Louisburg, Bruce scored a career-high 26 points. He was seven-of-eight from three-point range as the Cavaliers set a school record for three-point shots with 13. Meanwhile, Petty averaged over 15 points and seven rebounds as the Cavaliers ran their overall record to 15-6.

"Jason is our leading scorer and second leading rebounder," Montreat-Anderson Coach Steve McNamara said. "He has improved dramatically since he was a freshman. He is a hard worker, has a desire to win, and he does whatever we call on him to do."

As for Bruce, McNamara said, "He has started a couple of games as has been a spark for us in the second half of the season. He's also has come of the bench

and done a good job. His shooting ability opens things up for us. He is a positive asset and has helped out a lot."

Bruce is the son of Reverend Gene Bruce of the Grace Lutheran Church in Hickory. The church just happens to have a basketball court in its backyard. Despite the fact they were rivals, Petty and Bruce spent a lot of their time practicing on the court and that has played a big reason as to why both players have developed a great shooting touch.

"Just like Jason said, hard work pays off," Bruce said. "We spent many hours practicing on that court. Now, all the work is paying off. We have a great team that plays together and that is why we are winning."

Enough said!



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