

Men's hoops record improves from '04-'05

By KEVIN CHEN

Most high school basketball teams depend on the arrival of much anticipated players—TISAC powerhouse teams Ravenscroft and Durham Academy are prime examples. NCSSM is quite an exception. Every new school year brings its own unique mix of student athletes, and this year was no different. Until basketball season started, no one could



Victoria Park

Giffin Daughtridge goes up for a jumper

predict how well the men's team would fare against the competition. Brian Gonyeau, the head coach, had the insight to start preseason workouts months before the first game, allowing prospective players to get used to playing with each other on the court.

After tryouts in November, the season officially began. With only three returning seniors, it was up to the juniors to make or break the team. Juniors Emanuel Bryant and Tyrik Hicks would help senior Lindsey Erps make up the backcourt, while Andrew Amolegbe and Xavier Blount would form a strong inside presence. With the help of new assistant coach Anthony Myles, the Unicorns were ready to play some ball.

The first two games were heartbreakers: a 54-45 loss at Cresset Christian and a 67-59 overtime loss at home to Raleigh Charter. To make matters worse, the Unis' best playmaker Emanuel Bryant was injured and out for the season. Despite the adversity, the team made a big comeback at Rivermill Charter. With less than a minute to go, the Unis were down by 6. John Outten, who replaced Bryant as starting point guard, stepped up big time by draining two consecutive three's to tie up the game. As Rivermill brought the ball up the court, Lindsey Erps made a steal and was fouled. He made both free throws and the Unis were up by two. Another free throw secured the game and the Unis came out victorious, 59-56.

Against elite schools such as Durham Academy and Ravenscroft, the Unis have been competitive for much of the game. As for long time rivals Emerson Waldorf and Cape Fear Christian Academy, only one word comes to mind: blow-out. NCSSM won by 51 and 35 points respectively.

Throughout the course of the season, players have stepped up and adjusted after each and every game. Leading scorer and rebounder Xavier Blount has received plenty of help from the rest of the team. Lindsey Erps and David Rhoden have been averaging 9 points per game apiece, while Tate Rogers and Giffin Daughtridge have each been contributing just under 9 points per game. At 8-13, the team has already compiled a record that is better than last year's. John Outten, who basically fuels the offense, has also been a major factor in the success of the season.

Of course, the team would have gone nowhere without the guidance of Coach Gonyeau and Coach Miles. Every practice is designed to improve upon the previous game's mistakes by implementing a goal-based system. Each drill comes with a certain requirement that must be met, otherwise punishment in the form of running or pushups will result. In "Ladder", every player is expected to sprint from one end of the court to the other five times within five minutes. If not, then the entire team repeats the drill. Another drill consists of making a certain number of free throws under the pressure of having to run.

"It makes no sense for players to have to run endlessly for no beneficial purpose," added Gonyeau. "Having mini-goals for each drill allows players to practice with the mentality to improve."

During the midst of a tough, grueling season, the team has not forgotten to have fun along the way. Andrew Amolgebe, a junior who plays power forward, said that his most memorable moment of the season came after the team had just beaten Rivermill Charter.

"We were on the bus, and John, having made the three pointers, was having his glorious moment. That was until the rest of the team playfully reminded him that the original play involved passing the ball to David Rhoden for the shot. Everyone laughed."

And then there's the crowd. There's nothing like the home crowd at NCSSM. Even the most polished opponents can have difficulty playing in a rowdy gym with every bleacher occupied to the very edge by loud and cheering S&M'ers. With an amazing pep band playing in the background, any person is sure to have a good time at the game.

With only a few more games left in the season, look for the men's basketball team to finish strong.

Women's basketball team brings fresh moves to court

By MARGARET YIM

Sports at NCSSM—whether you participate or not, you know how it goes: practice interferes with studying, away games to faraway places the night before a big physics test, a two year school means that there are a lot of roster changes. The list of problems goes on, and yet one can still manage to find a team for just about every sport at NCSSM. Students may not have many of the luxuries that other schools do, but they do have what it takes to play, and that seems like a good way to describe the women's basketball team this year.

Armed with a good balance of talent in both outside and inside players, the Lady Unicorns show promise as a great team.

"This team has a lot of potential," said Head Coach Marion Meadows.

However, pitted against schools who recruit for athletics, NCSSM is at an obvious disadvantage that is not easily

overcome.

"We have improved every day, and that's all that you can ask for. I just wish they had more time to play with each other," Meadows said. With the academic load placed on student athletes at NCSSM, students simply cannot afford to practice for several hours a day. That simple time requirement has many other implications. Players at four-year high schools have been playing with their teammates for years, but at NCSSM, those odds are next to nothing given the statewide student pool and the two year turnover. The cooperation that comes with playing with each other for a long time is sorely missed.

"It takes a while to know how to play with everyone, and in that sense, [being at NCSSM] is a hindrance. But with what we have, the teamwork comes out in flashes on the court," Meadows said.

Despite the many difficulties faced by the Unis, there are

many noteworthy strengths of the team. A good mix of players from last year and this year has brought a degree of freshness to the court, and the mutual support between the teammates is inspiring.

"They want to see each other and the team do well," Meadows said. According to Meadows, the only thing the Unis are missing is confidence.

"We're better than we think. We don't play as well as we could. We doubt our skills," Meadows said.

However, the team believes that a stretch of wins is in sight by the end of the season, and a win at the Conference Tournament is more than possible. The women's basketball team is led by Meadows and Assistant Coach Sue Anne Lewis. Players include Seniors Tara Gill, Raven Jones, Frances Ni, Brittney Peters-Barnes, Hannah Wroblewski, and Margaret Yim; and Juniors Brittany Fotsch, Lauren Iannotte, Catherine Raymer, and Blair Wright.



Victoria Park

Catherine Raymer bringing the ball up against North Raleigh Christian. Hannah Wroblewski, Lauren Iannotte, and Blair Wright also shown.

Athlete Spotlight : Xavier Blount

By KEVIN CHEN

16 points per game, 9.4 rebounds. The numbers speak for themselves. Starting center for the men's basketball team, Xavier Blount has led the Unicorns to several important victories, including a 27 point, 20 rebound performance against Emerson Waldorf. In this case, experience is everything. Blount has been playing basketball since he was eight years old, and has played on many recreational teams. He also played for his home school, D.H. Conley High School, and attends East Carolina University Basketball Camp annually. Although it may not seem apparent, this season is actually Blount's first time at the center position. As a post player, Blount likes to model his game after Tim Duncan of the San Antonio Spurs. He can take you down low, where he's one drop step away from an easy basket, or he can knock down the jumper from the elbow. Blount is also an exceptional rebounder and shot blocker. Considering how versatile he is, it's a good thing that #41 is on NCSSM's team.

1. PERSONAL: 6'4", 185 lbs, size 17 shoe, lives with mother and sister
2. HOME SCHOOL: D.H. Conley, Greenville
3. FAVORITE CD: OMG Remix: Volume 1 & 2
4. EMOTIONAL ATHLETIC MOMENT: None
5. FAVORITE ATHLETICS MEMORY: Sending the Raleigh Charter game into overtime.
6. ATHLETICS LESSON: Keep your eye on the ball—you score more.
7. ATHLETICS ADVICE: The winner is the last one to quit.
8. IDOL: Tim Duncan
9. FOR 30 MIN I'D LIKE TO BE: Tim Duncan
10. IDEAL GUEST LIST: God, Magic Johnson, Larry Bird, Ray Hartsfield, and Jay-Z
11. LIKES: Basketball, pizza, Duke, Mario games, Ice Climbers
12. DISLIKES: Country music and Spanish
13. GREATEST AMBITION: To be successful.
14. COLLEGE PLANS: Undecided

