

Summer Basketball

Alumni escape All-Stars on dunk at the buzzer

By SAM DAVIS
Chronicle Sports Editor

Charles "Punkin" Douthit grabbed a loose ball and jammed it through the hoop at the buzzer to give the Alumni team a 102-100 victory over the Carver Summer League All-Stars last Thursday night.

Douthit's dunk climaxed an electrifying finish and allowed the Alumni to save face against their younger, less-experienced counterparts.

"When I got the ball, the only thing I thought of was to go to the basket the best way I know how," said Douthit, who outlept three opponents with his 42-inch vertical jump to notch the winning score.

"Those boys can really play," Douthit said of the feisty All-Stars. "They are one of the best all-star teams anywhere. We didn't believe they would be as tough as they were, but they showed a lot of fight."

Former Harlem Globetrotter Robert Little, who at 6-8 was matched against 6-9 Robert McIlwaine, had similar thoughts on the play of the young team.

"These are the best basketball players in the city," Little said. "As a whole, you couldn't get a better squad. They are a good group of kids. They are willing to listen to anyone that tries to help them."

Summer League director Hans Hentz said he was deeply moved by his team's performance and by the fact that the team voted to give him the Most Valuable Player Trophy.

"I thought we had the game won," said Hentz, who saw his

team come back from a seven-point deficit in the last five minutes to take the lead. "Everybody on the team played well. Although it's a little frustrating to lose such a well-played game, I'm proud of what these kids did."

Hentz's team was paced by the efforts of Brian Howard, Jeff Patton, Anthony Sides and Jack Maxwell down the stretch. Howard seemed to rise to the occasion against the veteran Alumni team, which also featured former high school standouts Sydney Wilkins, Vincent Brown and Mike "Pop Bottle" Thomas.

"This is the best group of young men that I have ever worked with," said Hentz, who formed the league five years ago. "They were eager to learn; they hustled and worked hard to improve during the year."

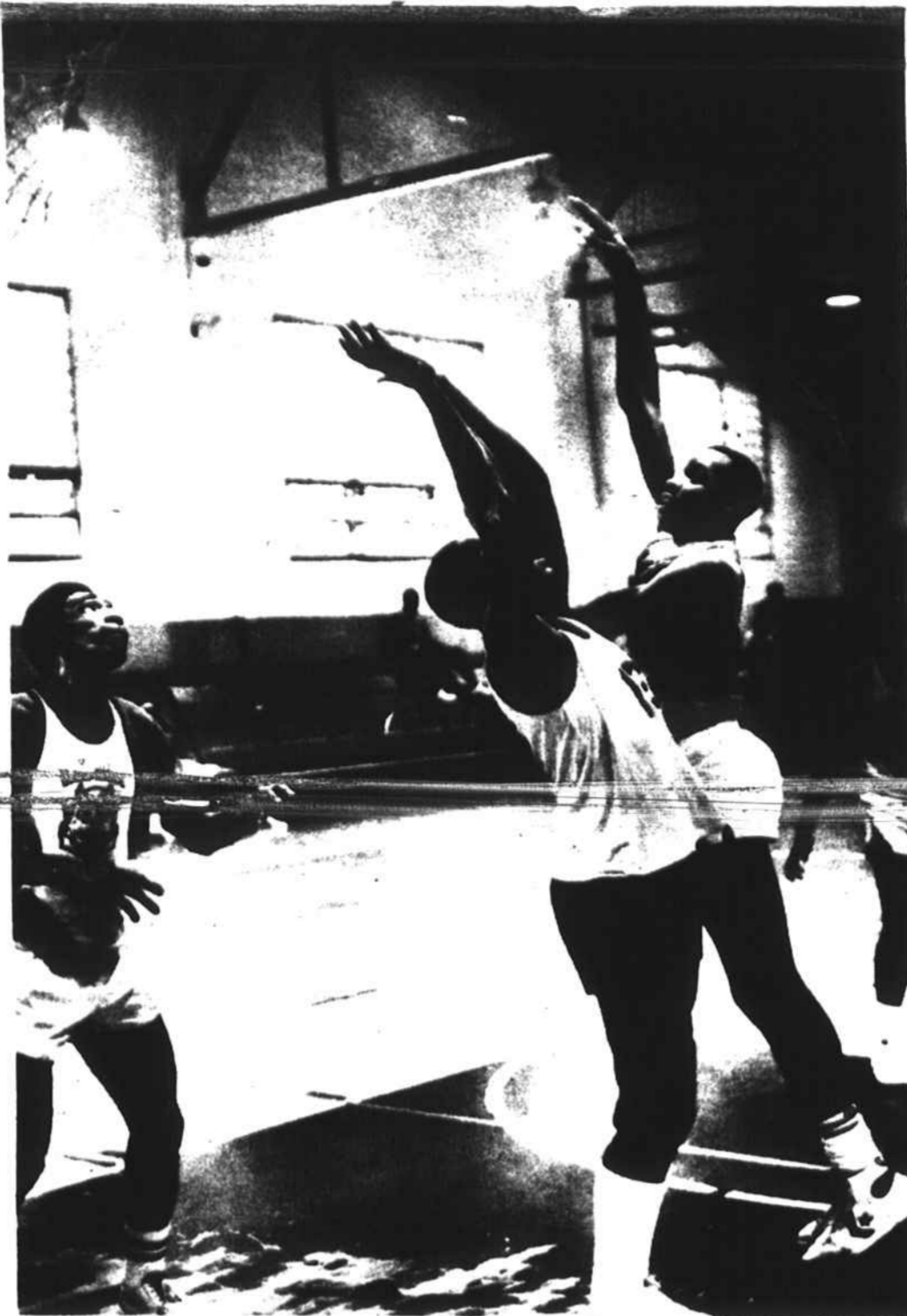
"I thought Jeff Patton had an outstanding game," said Hentz of the former Forsyth Country Day School cager. "Sides had a good game and Bryan Howard took control inside for us."

Both teams were eager to gain an early advantage; however, neither could pull away from the other. After the Alumni team got off to a good start, the All-Stars fought back to take a 49-48 lead after the first 20-minute half.

But the Alumni looked as they would put away the youngsters when they ran off eight unanswered points to start the second half.

Thomas and Brown (who plays at Gardner Webb), led the Alumni barrage and, at the 13-minute mark, the Alumni led 69-59.

Behind the efforts of Howard and Brian Leak, however, the All-Stars fought back. Howard



Summer League All-Star Bryan Howard jump hooks over 6-8 Robert Little as "Punkin" Douthit watches (photo by James Parker).

began to gain an advantage inside and his rim-shattering slam with nine minutes remaining brought his team within five at 78-73.

At that point, Hentz inserted Sides, Maxwell and Patton for starters Kenny Mickens, Robert McIlwaine and Leak.

The subs made their presence known from the outset and Patton's 35-foot bomb closed the gap to 79-76 with six minutes left. Patton's long-range shooting helped the All-Stars stay close.

The game see-sawed until 27 seconds remained and the Alumni team took a three-point advantage on Brown's free throws.

However, the upstart All-Stars refused to throw in the towel.

Howard quickly maneuvered inside for a basket to bring his team within one with 20 seconds remaining.

The All-Stars then looked to have the game won when Reid stole a pass off the Alumni team's spread offense and was credited with two points after Thomas goaltended his layup with only seven seconds on the clock.

But Douthit retrieved an errant pass on the Alumni team's in-bounds pass and his last-second heroics won the game.

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Hayes

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as first thought if several newcomers produce. "James Burch (of Parkland High School) is as good as we thought when we recruited him," Hayes said of the rookie linebacker. "He's a good hitter and he'll play early."

"We have three veteran linebackers returning so we'll be pretty solid," Hayes continued. "Our line looks strong with (Tim) Platt, (Mike) Warren and (Dan) Bryson."

In the secondary, Hayes expects the presence of 6-3, 230-pound Derrick Beasley to be a settling force. "Derrick is a tough strong safety," Hayes said of his prize sophomore. "He's big and strong and he also has speed (4.5 over 40 yards)."

Junior free safety Bruce Dunlap will also be counted upon to steady the Rams' defensive backfield, as will Angelo Spruill. Additional help will be provided by frosh Anthony Blaylock and Raymond Puryear.

While Hayes has added a host of talented freshmen, he also hired two new assistants who have a wealth of experience. Wylie Harris, former head coach at Johnson C. Smith, is the Rams' new defensive line coach and Joe Godette, formerly of East Carolina, handles the tight ends and linebackers.

"Wylie has a lot of coaching ability," said Hayes. "We've always been good friends, but we've never been on the same side of the ball, I'm very pleased to have him here working with us."

Another wrinkle Hayes is toying with is putting the ball in the air more this season. The Rams' success passing last year helped open up their running game and Hayes said a stronger aerial attack may keep opposing teams from stacking their defensive alignments to stop WSSU's league-leading "T-Bone" rushing attack.

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