

COMMENTARY

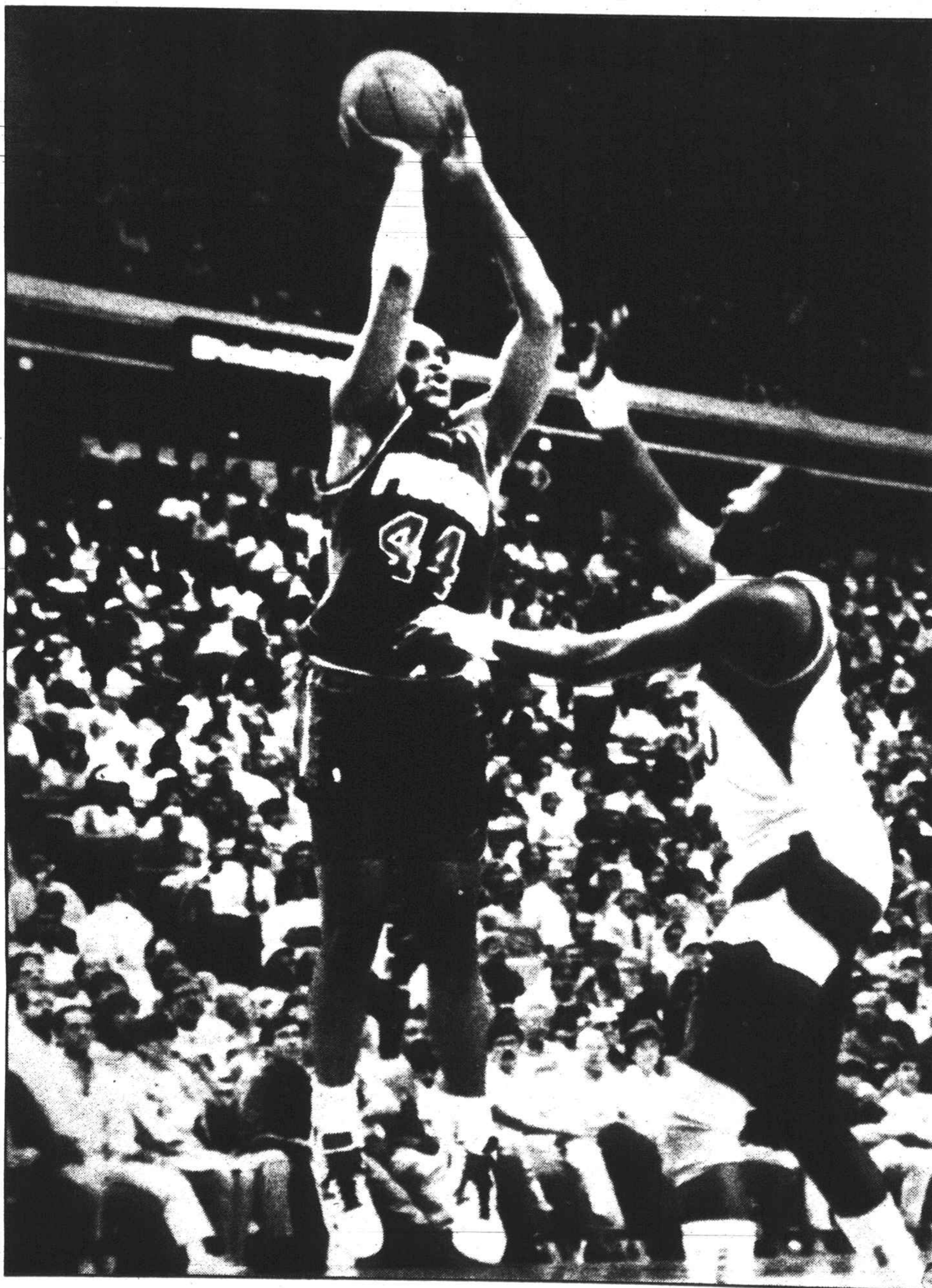
'Bad Boy' Mahorn gets the royal boot

Photo by The Magnificent Eye

Mahorn's brutish reputation follows him to Minnesota. The Minneapolis press has already labeled him as "The Big, Bad Wolf."

The NBA championship party was over before it started for Rick Mahorn.

Only two days after the Detroit Pistons swept the injury devastated Lakers for their first ever league title, big Rick discovered that his former employers were shipping him to a rookie team, the Minnesota Timberwolves.

The suddenness of Mahorn's removal didn't sit well with the former Hampton University performer. He bolted from the festivities faster than a light switch going off.

The 6-10, 260 Mahorn gave the Pistons what they have never had -- a tough guy who could bang in the paint and be the enforcer that teams need to win championships.

According to the folks in the Detroit media, Mahorn was simply caught in an odd situation. League rules only allowed teams to protect eight of their 12 players from being taken in expansion draft for factory new type teams like Minnesota and the Orlando Magic.

After all, it wasn't likely that the Pistons would let Vinnie "Microwave" Johnson get away, and certainly they decided they wouldn't part with back-up pivotman James Edwards, who is the team's only true low post scorer.

Some say that Mahorn became expendable because of "chronic" back problems. That's odd. Since being in Motown, the only time Mahorn really missed a lot of time because of the back was during the '87-'88 season when the Pistons took the Lakers to a seventh game before losing.

Let's not forget that Mahorn was voted Detroit's MVP by his own teammates that year.

Oh sure, I'm not particular about Mahorn's World Wrestling Federation style of play. He knows how to utilize his considerable bulk. It's an art form he picked up from Wes Unseld. But deeper still, he has become skilled at getting to opponents' heads. This guy has a way of rubbing folks the wrong way.

Yeah -- there have been some elbows thrown that produced shock waves to those who found themselves in the way. You can say what you want, but when Mahorn created the "Bad Boys" image, it gave the Pistons and the city of Detroit the kind of much needed lift they haven't felt for many moons when it comes to that town's sports teams.

No doubt, the Pistons wouldn't have gotten as far as they did without Mahorn. He's the kind of guy that fans or opponents don't care for. But when he's on your team, you don't mind it at all.

It will be interesting to discover if the Pistons can remain a complete team without their prime enforcer and earth shaker to stir folks minds and bodies.

They're going to need some beefy meanness considering the tough competition they'll face in the NBA's Central Division.

Well, Rick, at least you got your ring. They can't take that from you.

-Craig T. Greenlee