

Got a suggestion? Call sports writer Michael Johnson at 722-8624

James Jordan's alleged killer says he didn't commit crime. B5



SPORTS

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A Different Type of Ball Game

Last week, I received a book in the mail from Tim Keown called "Skyline—One Season. One Team. One City." The book is about the impossible dream of making it in the tough Oakland (Calif.) high school basketball leagues. Not only does the book give the rest of us an insight of basketball in the tough Oakland Athletic League, but the difficulties of life off the court as well.

While reading the book, I found myself walking in the footsteps of many of those kids, mostly black but occasionally a few white, using the basketball court as a canvas on which to show their creativity and the ball as a paint brush. For most of them, basketball is many things—a vice, a means to get away, an expression of their manhood.

"Without the game, I nuthin' man," said Nelson Burns, a 5-7 guard who usually sits on the end of the

COMMENTARY

By MICHAEL JOHNSON

Skyline bench. Burns, like most of the basketball players in the OAL, is black. Like most of his peers, basketball is a way of life for him. But unlike OAL stars Darnaryl Stamps, Anthony Byrd or Kareem Davis, the Skyline senior had no where to go and no time left.

In Oakland, dreams aren't logical. Dreams have to come because...well, they have to. Life is too tough to live for anything else except for the cheers, the recognition, the outside chance of being a legend. A Bill Russell, a Paul Silas, a Gary Payton. You couldn't follow in someone's shadow; you had to create one.

Ask Jason Wright, the junior star for the Titans. Every game was step toward immortality. Against Castlemont in a jamboree, Wright wowed the crowd with an off-the-backboard slam. In another game, Wright shot middle fingers to the crowd. Against OAL rival McClymonds, Wright was warned about the crowd to do that again, he would know what would happen next.

"I want to have me a little name around the OAL," Wright said. Wright lived for the crowd, the rush of adrenaline that came over him energized him to achieve even more.

For some, basketball was a means for escape. For Calvin Wilson, basketball was the only way he could be himself. The 17-year old took a two-hour commute from San Francisco by bus to Oakland, leaving home at 5:30 in the morning and not getting home until 9 o'clock at night.

Wilson's world took a turn for the worse when his mother was gravely ill. After staying at the hospital all night, Wilson went to school the next day to play against Fremont. It was the only way to get away, to become Calvin Wilson, basketball player instead of another face in the crowd.

Then there was Darren Albert. His world was completely torn apart when his brother Eric was left paralyzed after a shooting incident in nearly San Ramon. Darren quit the football team to be with his brother because someone had to change Eric's urine bag. Basketball became his get-away, even though he wasn't good at it.

Some of the players enjoyed the high road of athletics. Will Blackwell was a Parade All-American in football that needed basketball more than the sport needed him. Conversely, Eric Govan dreamed of getting the Division I scholarship that would eventually elude him.

Finally, there was David Strom, the white player in the all-black OAL. Every game was to show that he belonged. Strom had to show the world that basketball coursed through his veins as much as it did through his contemporaries.

I hope that many of the parents in the Winston-Salem community will purchase the book when it hits the stands this March. They should buy it not only for their children, but for themselves. Let your children see how tough life can be if their only way of living is through sports. That dreams of becoming a star is loaded with dreamers but few chances of catching hold to that dream.

Let them look at the "glamorous" life in Oakland. Show the how a group of McClymonds players locked the Skyline entrance after a game and sprayed the audience with bullets. Then tell them to substitute the names of Compton, Long Beach and any other city, including Winston-Salem.

Then, ask yourselves if you understand the importance of sports in the lives of adolescents. To watch them grow and develop, become more mature. Sports is a part of the African-American youth life, especially for males. Don't ignore it.

Tiny Indians Hold Year-End Ceremony

▲ Awards given by Organization stressing academic and athletic excellence

By MICHAEL JOHNSON
Chronicle Sports Writer

The Tiny Indians Football Club of Winston-Salem held an awards banquet Saturday night at Winston-Salem State to honor those students who achieved a milestone on and off the field.

More than 200 players, cheerleaders, coaches and boosters received a trophy to commemorate another year of Pop Warner football. But Michael Shepherd and Emmanuel Werts were the biggest winners, each receiving the Robert L. Dunlap Trophy for the best academic performance on the Junior Varsity PeeWee program.

"There are a number of kids who wouldn't have been given the opportunity to accomplish the things they have," Tiny Indians Vice President Michael Stroud said. "These kids learned how to overcome their anxieties in the classroom...and learned how to pay attention in the classroom."

Shepherd and Werts headed the organization's 13-member All-Academic team. Included on the team are Shiqeta Barr, Anisha Bowers, Christopher Cannon, Tamara Dobson, Candice Griffin, Melvin Hill, Tiffany Lee, Chris Leggett, Gilbert McRae, Elyes Rice,

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Michael Shepherd (left) and Emmanuel Werts each received the Robert L. Dunlap Award for having the highest grade point average for the Junior Pee Wee squad. Dunlap is a former program director at the Patterson Street YMCA.

Tracey Bobbitt: From Baseline to Sidelines

▲ Former WSSU hoops star begins inaugural season as assistant coach

By MICHAEL JOHNSON
Chronicle Sports Writer

Sitting on the bench during basketball practice, you would be hard pressed to believe that Tracey Bobbitt is an assistant basketball coach at a major university.

Wearing a gym suit with a hat and T-shirt proudly displaying her sorority allegiance, Bobbitt looks more like a student than a coach. With a hat pulled over her eyes which are peeking out behind a pair of glasses, she carefully glazes over the players.

Then, Bobbitt begins to analyze each players movements and speaks in a tone that betrays her purpose for sitting on the bench.

"I'm able to look at some of those players and look at some of their mistakes, what they're doing wrong as a basketball player," said the 24-year old, who is in her first season as assistant coach for the Winston-Salem state women's basketball team. "It's hard to know what you're doing when

you're on the floor, but up here, I can see everything out there."

It's ironic Bobbitt can be found on the bench at this scrimmage because that's where she decided she wanted to become a coach. Bobbitt, who averaged 13 points per game during her career at WSSU from 1989-92, used to take her going to the sidelines seriously, wondering about coach Stinson Conley's decisions to pull her. But during each stay on the



Tracey Bobbitt

sidelines, she would look at the game and saw a different view of what was going on.

"The game was lot different from what I saw, so it was like looking at a different world," Bobbitt said. "It was during my sophomore year that I wanted to try coaching out."

By the time her playing career had ended, Bobbitt was at a crossroads in her life. In her final semester at WSSU, she found out that she needed to take a

few more electives to graduate. Instead of going to summer school and earning her degree in December, Bobbitt decided to wait until this spring to finish.

In the meantime, Bobbitt needed something to pass the time away with.

"She came to my office and asked about becoming a volunteer assistant," Conley said. "At the time, I already had an assistant coach and I couldn't pay her. But she wanted to be a part of the team and she came aboard."

During the 1992-93 season, Bobbitt learned about the game as Conley's understudy. Watching how Conley directed the players, she became more aware of the intimate details that what it takes to be a head coach. What Bobbitt contributed is an understanding of the players and how to express them to the coach.

At first, it was little weird to have her as a coach because she was one of us just a couple of years ago," WSSU guard Kendra Horne said. "But she's been able to relate to us what's going on and she knew what we wanted to do."

Impressed about her abilities, particularly in her handling the guards, Conley asked Bobbitt about the now-vacant position rather than interview a pool of applicants. One of Bobbitt's responsibilities is the development of the guards. The Durham native believes that a rebuilding WSSU will give her oppor-

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14th Street Boxing Program A Knockout Success

By MICHAEL JOHNSON
Chronicle Sports Writer

When you teach a child something he wants to learn, you can never get rid of them. Ask William Kennedy.

One day near his Bellview home last year, Kennedy helped a kid learn how shoot a basketball. Two days later, the gentleman was besieged a group of youngsters who wanted to learn the game. But upon enter his house, the youths saw the boxing trophies Kennedy won in his fighting days.

"I told them if they want to be successful and get some of this, then they'll have to work for it," Kennedy said, the founder of the Winston-Salem amateur boxing team. "Being a boxer is nothing easy and I didn't want them to say I didn't warn them."

Kennedy's hard work and effort is beginning to return some

dividends. Last month, the 4-man team of three eight- to ten-year old youths and a twenty-year old man made its debut in the AAU boxing federation last month at High Point City Lake. Eight-year old Antoine Hairston won first place in his category while the adult—Darran Smith—was a runner-up in the 158-pound weight class.

"I didn't know about boxing when I was a kid, so I'm happy I won a trophy," Antoine said—the aforementioned kid who was taught by Kennedy. "It was a big payback to win one."

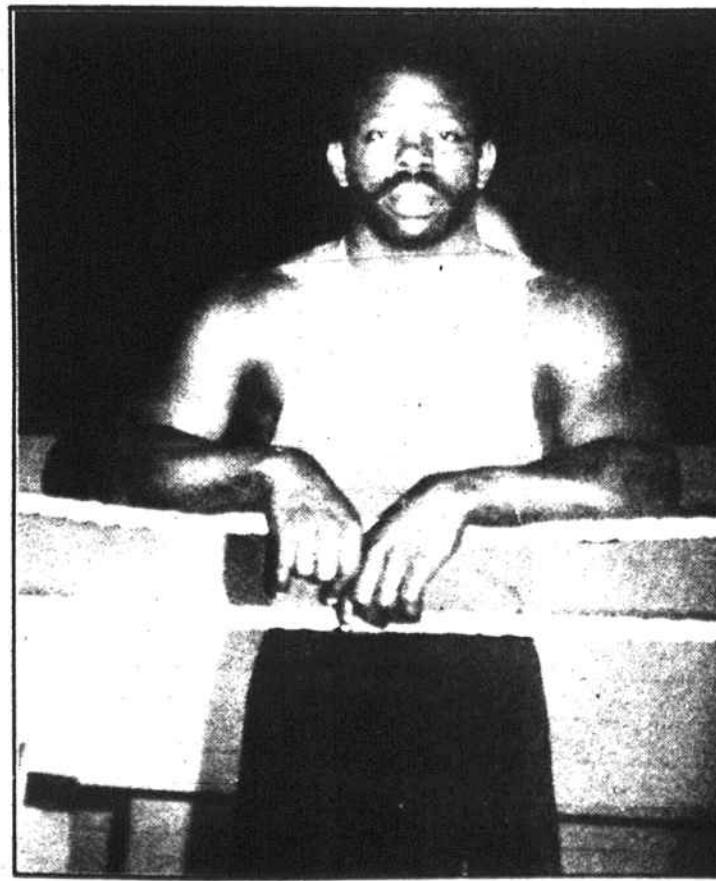
For the past year, Kennedy would pick up the youths at 5:30 p.m. and drive them to the 14th Street Recreational Center, where they practice for two hours a day each Monday through Thursday. The boxers train in a secluded storage room, far away from the basketball games that are now prevalent among black youths. But

the coach and trainer is not concerned about developing a stable of stars.

"We're teaching them how to be competitive and prepare them not only how to deal with boxing, but with life," Kennedy said. "Being out here in the streets for these kids is about the same as going against a boxer. If you can control your body, how can you not tell a pusher. No, I don't want any drugs?"

Kennedy has seen the glorious side of boxing and its darker side. A former cruiserweight boxer, Kennedy participated in the 1984 Olympic tryouts and has sparred against professional heavyweight champions Larry Holmes, Michael Spinks, Tim Witherspoon and Evander Holyfield.

But Kennedy has also seen



14th Street boxing instructor William Kennedy

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