

Yellowjackets

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After completing a 30-0 season that culminated in the state 3-A title last year, the Yellowjackets have battled through many injuries and a rash of illness this season. The Yellowjackets captured the Mary Garber Holiday tournament championship in November for the third consecutive year. They followed that up with a championship in the Dell Curry Shootout in Charlotte. But they haven't been the same since.

"We haven't had everybody in practice together since Dec. 18," Carter said. "We've had people out for one reason or another ever since."

Jones injured her tailbone when she was taken out on a

layup. The injury was misdiagnosed and was later found out to be much more serious than first thought because it affected her psiatic nerve, which runs all the way up the leg. She's been battling ever since to come back and still hasn't recovered 100 percent. That's one of the reasons the team hasn't been blowing away the competition the way it did last year.

Without Jones and several other players at full speed (on Friday Jones and some of her teammates were also trying to fight off the effects of a touch of the flu), Carter was reluctant to press the opposition. However, after falling behind to Rockingham, Carter decided to go with it in the fourth quarter.

It resulted in eight Rock-

ingham County turnovers in the fourth quarter, with most of them resulting in Carver scoring opportunities.

"We knew we couldn't use it a lot," Carter said. "We felt like if we could just stay in the game where we could get to a point where we could use it, we would be all right."

Once the pressure was turned up, Rockingham County had trouble inbounding the ball and had to call timeout on three separate occasions to prevent turnovers.

"It was a great game," Carter said. "Last year we thought they were the best team we played, and they are the best team we've played this year. We'll probably have a couple of more dates against them, so we have to work really hard to get ready for them."

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what his teammates like best about him. He can score and rebound, but he cares most about winning. He'll find the open man when he has the ball, and he's not concerned about individual accomplishments."

With his 1140 score on the SAT and 4.0 grade point average, Drum has become a solid Division I prospect and has drawn attention from nearly every Ivy League school.

Drum helped the Vikings get out of the gate early this season. He's surrounded by a host of talented players whose individual progress this season has matched that of the team. Walt Baxley is one player who has improved by leaps and bounds. A role player at the start of the season, Baxley came through with a key performance at the Frank Spencer and has become one of the area's top scorers. In the Vikings' nine conference

games, the 6-4 senior is averaging more than 20 points per game to up his average on the season to 17.0.

"Walt Baxley is the one who's really stepped up since the Frank Spencer," Muse said.

"That was his coming out party and he's not looked back."

Stephano Jackson's play at the point has also been a steadying influence on the team. The 5-10 junior is starting for the third consecutive year. He leads the team in assists with 5.3 per game, has averaged 4.0 steals and is surrendering only about four turnovers per game.

"His assist to turnover ratio has gotten better and that is important," Muse said. "Friday night he had his biggest offensive game of the season with 20 points and that really was a boost for us. He has the ability to score as well as handle the ball."

The Vikings have gotten good play from a host of other

players throughout the season.

"We've had a lot of guys to step up and play big," Muse said. "Friday night one of them was Corey Baker, who scored 17 points. It was unexpected, but we really needed him to score and that helped us go on a run to put the game away."

As he looks back on where the team has come from in only two seasons at the helm, Muse said the Vikings have climbed some high hurdles to get to where it is as the No. 5-ranked 4-A team in the state.

"To get where we are in only two years is amazing," Muse said. "The ability of those kids to buy into our system, along with a lot of hard work, has been important. Also, I have some great assistants in Sean Vestal and Walter Faye."

Now that they're back on top Muse said he won't let the Vikings rest on their laurels.

"We still have a long way to go," he said. "We have to remember what got us here and continue to work to get better."



Dwayne Ijames, seated, signs his scholarship to attend Elon. He is joined by Reynolds principal Stan Elrod, Tiffany Ijames, Starr Ijames, Patricia Ijames and David Atkins.

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Team, he was a member of the All-Northwest Team.

Coach David Atkins said Byrom set the tone for the Reynolds team on and off the field.

"Omar worked very hard on his academics and in the weight room," Atkins said. "He is a good person.

Appalachian is lucky to have him."

Coach Jerry Moore of Appalachian State said Atkins is a welcome addition to his team.

"Omar is a good athlete," Moore said. "He may end up playing a wide variety of positions such as tight end or defensive line or outside linebacker."

Byrom shared team MVP honors with Ijames, who

signed with Elon. Ijames (6-0, 170) was a two-time member of the all-conference team.

"Dwayne is an outstanding student and also worked hard in the weight room," Atkins said.

Coach Al Seagraves of Elon was impressed with Ijames' strong character and leadership ability. At Elon he will likely step in right away to help shore up the defensive secondary.

Davis

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Harrison Davis, by her side this season. Davis' father was a standout at Anderson High and N.C. Central. He's also been involved in youth sports for more than two decades.

"He is very helpful," she said. "He taught me everything I know about basketball."

Sometimes when I get out of synch he'll step up and help me out and keep things running smooth."

Kesha Gregory leads the team in scoring with a 16-point average. Gregory, a 5-7 forward, has been the team's toughest inside player throughout the season. She also leads the team in rebounding. Brittany Ward is second on the team with a 12-point average, and Tameka Hayes is next at 8 points per game. Lindsay Cleveland, Erica Ford, Tameisha Hill and Lameka Gambrell round out the rest of the Mus-

tangs' regular rotation.

Gregory came through with one of her best performances of the season last Friday night when the Lady Mustangs defeated Greensboro Dudley by a 51-43 score. Gregory scored 23 points to lead her team to victory. She was backed by Ward, who chipped in with 12 points.

"It was good to win the game, but I wasn't really pleased with the way we played," Davis said. "We were up by 12 at the half and we sort of relaxed and let them come back and almost tie the game. But in the fourth quarter we pushed hard and gave them everything we had to get the win."

The team is still in the learning stages, according to Davis. Because the players aren't used to winning, they sometimes allow leads to slip away. But Davis said they are a long way from where they used to be.

"I think they feel good about themselves," she said. "I think they believe in me and my dad. They come to work every day and they're willing to work and push themselves in practice. Every game they step out on the court they step out to win."

If the team can do that in its final week of play, it could find itself atop the conference standings if it gets some help from other teams in the conference. The Mustangs had a key matchup with Rockingham on Tuesday, followed by battles against Carver on Wednesday and Southwest Guilford to close out the season on Friday.

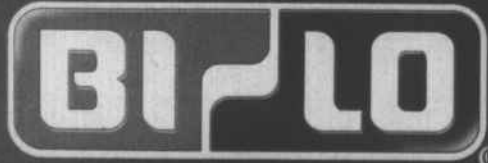
"No matter what happens, I feel good about this year," said Davis, who is an assistant in the exceptional children's department at Parkland.

"Everyone on the team knows their roles and they are willing to accept them to help the team win," Davis said.



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