

SPORTS WEEK

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'It's been a growing experience,' says Lady Warcats' coach

Team in regular season slump

BY CRAIG T. GREENLEE
FOR THE CHRONICLE

Over the past four seasons, the Winston-Salem Lady Warcats have proven themselves as viable contenders in the Carolinas Region of the Women's Blue Chip Basketball League. This season it's been a different story.

Winston-Salem (3-5) looks to end its regular season on a winning note when it faces USA Elite on July 11 at the Fulton Family YMCA (2 p.m. tip-off). Regardless of the outcome of that contest, the Lady Warcats are assured of finishing below the .500 mark for the first time in the team's five-year history.

In a league in which the regular season runs a little over three months, losing streaks can prove to be disastrous. Such was the case for the home team. The Warcats



Geter

improve with every game," said Chris Geter, the Lady Warcats first-year coach. "We've only had one blow-out loss all season, so we've been in every game. It's been a growing experience."

The Lady Warcats like to establish a defensive presence, which in turn, fuels their offense. Under Geter, Winston-Salem attacks with a combination of full-court and half-court presses and traps. With a roster that goes

experienced a four-game losing streak in May, which put their season in jeopardy. In two of those losses, the average margin of defeat was four points.

"Our record doesn't show it, but we've continued to

10 players deep, the Lady Warcats are able to keep fresh bodies on the court and apply constant pressure for an

See Warcats on B2

BASKETBALL

Hamby making headway as upstart rookie in WNBA

BY CRAIG T. GREENLEE
FOR THE CHRONICLE

Dearica Hamby draws a blank when asked about her memories of the moments leading up to her WNBA debut with the San Antonio Stars. What she does recall is how stunned she was after learning that she was in the starting lineup.

Hamby, a first-round draft pick, didn't wilt under the glare of the bright lights. The rookie from Wake Forest contributed 10 points and 5 rebounds on 4-of-8 field goal shooting in a 76-71 road loss to the defending league champ Phoenix Mercury.

"When they told me I would start, it came as a shock," said Hamby, who was the sixth overall pick in the WNBA Draft in April. "With this being my first year, I didn't expect it and I was a little nervous. But by the time the second half came around, I was able to settle down. Once I got my feet wet, I felt a lot more like myself out there on the floor."

From all indications, Hamby, a 6-foot-3 guard, has a very promising future with San Antonio. Aside from emerging as a dependable scorer, she typically draws the assignment of defending the league's best perimeter players on a nightly basis.

After eight games, Hamby's averaging 10.1 points and 6.3 rebounds a game, and she's third on the team in minutes played (24.3 per game). Coach Dan Hughes is excited about what Hamby brings to the table for his team.

"De is making an impact as a rookie," said Hughes. "She's learning on the run, playing against the best in the world, and she's holding her own."

"In my opinion, she's having the best start of any rookie in the league. She'll continue to grow as she learns more about the pro game and learns more about her own capabilities. With De, there's so much up-side."

It didn't take long for Hamby to experience her first homecoming as a pro. Six days after the season opener, the Stars flew east to play the Atlanta Dream. She grew up in the nearby suburb of Norcross. It was Hamby's first time playing in front of the home folks as a pro. Hamby went 7-of-11 from the field and finished with 17 points and 6 rebounds.

Being on the visiting team in a game played in her hometown is nothing new for Hamby. During her college career, she made several trips to Atlanta when Wake Forest played ACC rival Georgia Tech. "I usually do well when I come back home," said Hamby, who played small forward and power forward for the Deacons. "It's so much fun to play in front of friends and family. That game gave me a lot of confidence. I was able to show what I'm capable of doing."

San Antonio's season has been somewhat of a struggle so far. The Stars lost their first six games, which marked the worst start in franchise history. The record, though, doesn't tell the whole story. Three of those defeats were by single digits.

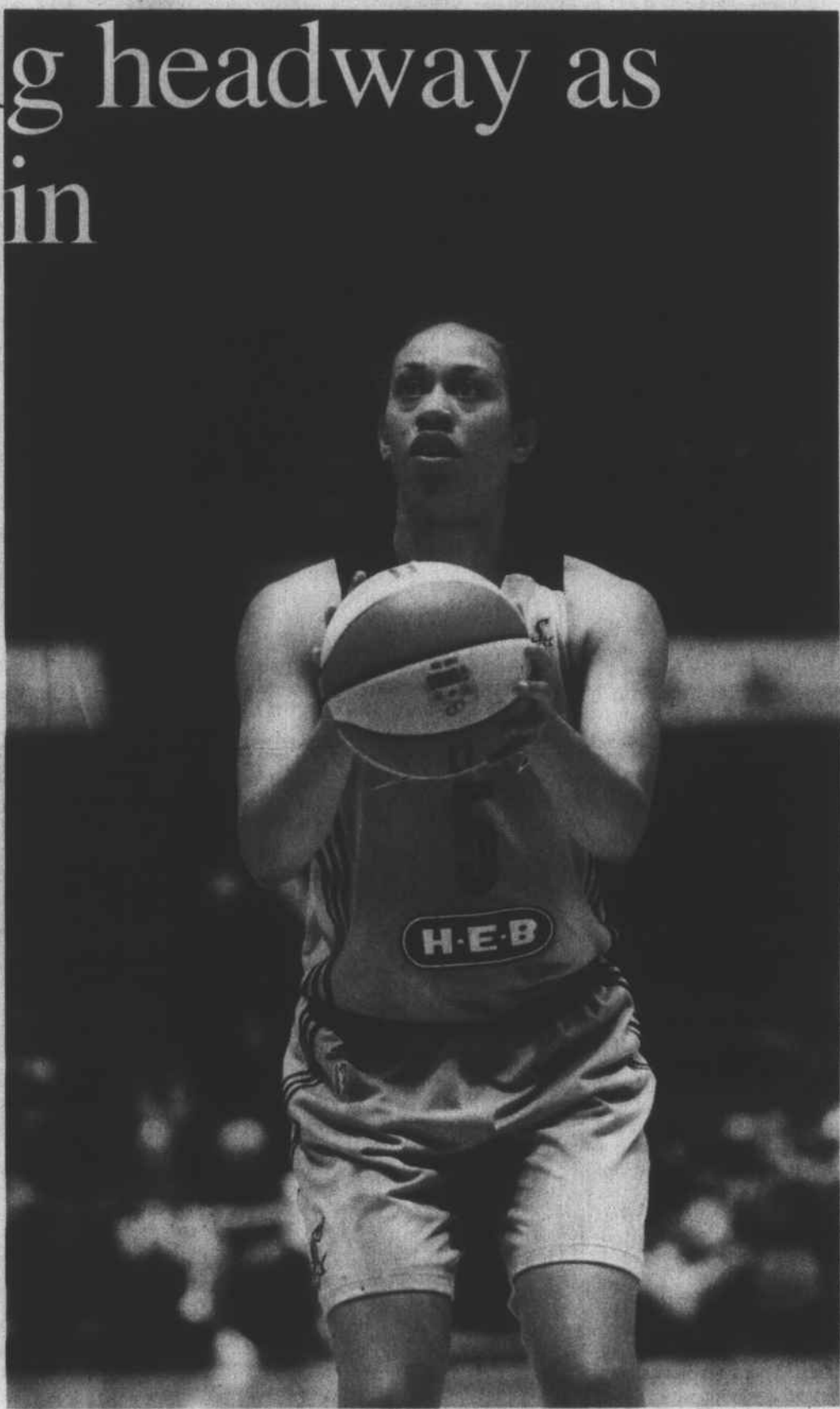


Photo by San Antonio Stars

Dearica Hamby is averaging 10.1 points and 6.3 rebounds for the San Antonio Stars this season.

See HAMBY on B2

Former world-class gymnast continues to pay it forward

BY CRAIG T. GREENLEE
FOR THE CHRONICLE

It's been 15 years since Chris Young retired from competitive gymnastics. Nevertheless, the inspiring story of how he overcame long odds to become a world-class gymnast never gets old.

Young, who was born and raised in Winston-Salem, was introduced to the sport by Big Brother/Big Sisters volunteer Ron Brown. Initially, the sport seemed to be an odd fit for a black youngster who didn't grow up in the suburbs.

Enter Bob Kohut, a local gymnastics coach who saw much promise in Young when he visited his Salem Gymnastics

Center. Kohut would eventually become Young's mentor and coach. Young, in the meantime, blossomed as an elite-level performer.

Along the way, he won the all-around title at the Junior National Gymnastic Championships. Young, who graduated from West Forsyth in 1992, attended the University of Minnesota on a gymnastics scholarship and later on, he earned a spot on the national team (1998-2000). In 1999, Young made the USA roster for the Pan-American Games and World Championships.

As a youngster, Young's ultimate dream was to compete for medals in the

Olympic Games. That long-held vision, however, would never materialize. Six months before the 2000 U.S. Olympic Trials, Young ruptured his Achilles tendon and never fully recuperated. Although he was granted special permission to compete in the Trials, it was evident that Young wasn't healthy enough to perform at his very best.

While Young fell short in his Olympic quest, he was satisfied that he gave everything he had to give under the most difficult of circumstances. At the age of 27, he called it a career. Not long after the Olympic Trials, Kohut helped Young realize an even bigger vision when the two

became the co-owners of a new venture — Flip Force Gymnastics, which is based in Kernersville.

Not only was Young part owner, but he would get plenty of opportunities to help mold young people as a coach — much in the same manner that Kohut did with him.

Flip Force Gymnastics offers a wide variety of programs for youth of all ages and skill levels. In walking around the spacious gym, there's plenty of visual evidence hanging from the walls, which testify to the program's ability to develop athletes who can compete at the highest levels.

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