



Photo by Craig T. Greenlee

**Naem Razzak dribbles past a defender during last week's boys' East-West All-Star Basketball Game played in Greensboro.**



Photo by Craig T. Greenlee

**Sydnie Rogers**

**Rogers**

from page B1

attention to earning a nursing degree with a specialization in neonatal care.

Rogers, however, admits that she could change her mind and attend try-outs as a walk-on. "Right now, it's hard to say whether I'll give basketball another shot or not. We'll see what happens."

At Atkins, Rogers, a 5-foot-9 forward, was an all-purpose standout who averaged 9.6 points and 5.3 rebounds per game last season. Her versatility at both ends of the floor was vital in the Camels putting together another stellar season (17-5). The previous year, Atkins was 19-8, which marked a big turnaround from Rogers' freshman year when the team went 2-7.

Atkins finished up last season as the Northwest Conference runner-up behind eventual state champ Winston-Salem Prep. During the season, the Camels split their two games against the Phoenix.

Rogers, who served as team co-captain for two years, contributed as dependable scorer, rebounder and distributor. Defensively, Rogers typically guarded the opponent's best player, which put her in situations where she would defend at all five positions. Equally important was her presence as the stabilizing influence for a young team that had only two seniors on the roster.

"We established chemistry at Atkins, and it took us a long way," said Rogers, who graduated with a 4.54 weighted grade-point average. "I'm happy that I played a part

in the team's growth. It was my job to be that voice on the court and off the court. I have faith that they'll get the job done and win a state title next year."

There's no question about Rogers' love for the game. The desire to go into neonatal nursing, though, transcends basketball. Her interest in pursuing a career in health care started as a fourth-grader.

"I remember the pediatric nurse who came to school as part of Career Day," said Rogers. "I thought it was so cool to have the skills to be able to help take care of newborn babies. Since I love kids, I knew when I was in elementary school that being a neonatal nurse would be the perfect job for me. I just want to do all I can to make sure that infants get the best quality of health care possible."

**Razzak**

from page B1

points, 4 rebounds and 2 assists for the West team in the All-Star Game. "It all comes down to me attacking the basket and making sure that everybody gets their touches. That's my approach to the game. It's a proven winning basketball formula.

"Looking back four years ago, I didn't think I might one day be an All-Star and get to attend college and play basketball. Dreams do come true."

The left-handed Razzak looks to make a similar impact as a freshman at Lees-McRae College this year. He understands that as a college basketball newbie, he'll go through an adjustment period like he did when he first arrived at Mount Tabor as a ninth-grader.

The competition will be tougher than high school, and the level of intensity figures to be much higher. It's a challenge that he embraces.

"The main thing for me is to fit in with

their system," he said. "It's all about hard work and proving myself. As long as I do that, I'm confident that my turn will come. One of the areas of my game that I'll devote a lot of time to is my shot. That's really going to help at the next level. I've learned that when you continue to work on a skill, you continue to get better at it and it shows."

Razzak said his confidence about making an impact at the next level comes from the experiences he had while playing under Coach Andy Muse at Mount Tabor. The growing process he went through, Razzak explained, was good preparation for the next level.

"When you play for Coach Muse, there's more to it than basketball," he said. "I learned a lot about being a man, taking responsibility and being accountable. Maturity has a lot to do with it. As you continue to mature, you continue to grow. I'm looking forward to going to Lees-McRae. It feels like home. It's a good fit."

**QB job**

from page B1

Rams' season opens at UNC Pembroke on Sept. 3.

A year ago, Johnson was third on the depth chart behind Phillip Sims (Arizona Cardinals free agent) and Rudy Johnson. Even though playing time was sparse, Johnson learned a few lessons that he believes will help him for the upcoming season.

"Learning from Phillip and Rudy was a great experience," said Johnson, who played high school ball at High

Point Central. "They had such an impact because of their confidence and their ability to keep their cool and take control of the team."

Entering this season, Johnson is an unknown quantity because of limited playing time. At 6-feet-3, 200 pounds, he's sturdy enough to handle the pounding that quarterbacks are exposed to. Equally important is his ability to make on-target throws. An added bonus is his break-away speed (runs 4.4 seconds in the 40-yard dash).

"Justin has so much upside as a pure athlete," said WSSU quarterbacks coach Jason Mai. "Not only is he straight-line fast, but he's very explosive when he changes

direction. He has tremendous arm strength and has improved his accuracy a great deal."

Johnson was not available for duty for spring practice because of academic difficulties. Those issues have been resolved and now he's eligible and back on track. Even though he's had a lengthy layoff, he's confident that he'll perform up his capability.

"I've gone hard at it since the end of spring," he said. "With all the drills and the work I've put in with the weights, there shouldn't be any rust. I believe it will all pay off and I'll be ready to go on Aug. 10."

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**FRIDAY @ 9 P.M.**  
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