

Jazz delivers in semis

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(Rudy Tomjanovich) said he was embarrassed, and I agree with that. It was embarrassing the way we played.”

Said Utah coach Jerry Sloan: “Look at the field-goal percentage. How else do you explain it? Thirty-eight percent? That wasn’t our defense.”

Imagine if Hakeem Olajuwon had fallen in line. He was the Rockets’ glare, the one Houston player of significance who produced.

But a game-high 30 points is not worth much when the 10 others combine for 56, and the 13 rebounds, which tied Malone for top honors, was five better than

the next closest teammate.

Not that the Jazz was its synchronized best either to take a lead in the conference finals for the first time in its four appearances, not while shooting 44 percent.

Still, John Stockton had 16 points and 13 assists against only two turnovers and Jeff Hornacek added 19 points and the bench played well, led by Shandon Anderson’s 11 points and five rebounds.

But even with his subpar shooting, and even with his plan to low-key the pregame ceremonies, there was no way Malone was going to avoid the spotlight.

If he had not waited a lifetime for this moment, the people of the

city and the region had, finally getting national recognition after years of bemoaning how they were ignored.

Malone had carried the banner of no-respect himself at times. But when the trophy was presented, it was as if he had a get-away car rumbling outside.

It was no snub, to the fans or the moment. It was, Malone said with all sincerity, a necessity.

“I wanted to enjoy it,” he said. “But I didn’t want to get caught up in it.”

That chance will come later, in the summer. These moments are for something else.

For the games Malone hopes will become the trophy he really wants to hold.

Pookie Wilson is defensive-minded

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progress. I was at Double-A the last two years and finally got a shot at Triple-A and I’m enjoying it so far.”

At Portland, Wilson hit .273 in 1995 and .256 last season. Charlotte manager Carlos Tosca, who coached him for four seasons, called it a “privilege” to work with him.

“He’s a quality guy,” Tosca said. “He can contribute both when he’s playing and when he’s not playing and that’s a tremendous attribute to have.”

“He’s a true team player and he can do some things...play good

defense, he can come off the bench and get a hit, he can steal a base when he has to. I’m tickled to death that he’s up here and I know that he’ll make a contribution to our team.

With the \$61 million-man Gary Sheffield out of the Marlins’ lineup due to injury, outfielder Bill McMillon was recalled to Florida, opening a spot for Wilson in Charlotte’s lineup. Tosca wants to keep him around for a while.

“I’ll do everything within my power to try and keep him on our ball club because I know he’s a positive influence,” Tosca said. “He works real hard and his angles and positioning to fly balls

is very good. That helps him make up for some of the speed he’s lost.”

The 27-year-old Wilson showed his defensive prowess in a three-game series last week against Ottawa. He snared several big catches and contributed key hits in Charlotte’s sweep.

“I used to be fast before my old age hit,” Wilson said. “I think I still run pretty well, but I’m the type of guy who just gets on and tries to make something happen. Defensively, I just make the routine plays. I may have a few spectacular plays here and there, but I’m mostly just a sound defensive type guy.”

SPORTS BRIEFS

FROM STAFF REPORTS

Results of Par Busters of Charlotte at the Interstate Golf Association Tournament at Crystal Springs Golf Course:

Team scores: Charlotte 57; Columbia 59; Asheville-Shelby 61; Chester-Spartanburg 61; Greenville 66; Statesville 67.

Skins game: First – Charles Lawrence \$150; second – Taylor Duncan \$150; seventh – Charles Lawrence \$150; 15th – Harry Benton \$150.

Donald Littlejohn 74; Tim Harris 74; Roger Sifford 77; James Barrett 78; Haywood Stevenson 79; Jack Richards 80; Otis Worthy 80; Louis Rorie 81; Walt Colson 82; James Scott 83.

• The Charlotte Stars 10-under AAU basketball team won the N.C. championship last month in Salisbury. The Stars were undefeated throughout the season and will compete in the national AAU tournament Aug. 1-8 in Orlando, Fla. This is the first year 10-under girls have been eligible to compete in the nationals.

Players on the team include: Krystal Barringer; Jihan Cleveland; Lakindra Fleming; Takisha Granberry; La’vonna Hailey; Carol Kenley; Charmeen Mack; Jasmin Morris; Erica Nelson; Brandi Nunez; Ashley Rivens; Katie Tucker; Ivory Wallace and Morgan Mutts. Coaches are Carrie Tucker, Yolanda Massey and Billy Tucker.

Tuitt

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has entered him in the 400 meters as well as the 800 relay and 1600 relay. Yet, if there was an area of sprinting which Tuitt could improve on, it would be starts.

“To be more successful in the 100 we will have to work on his start,” McAfee said. “Although he is better at the 200, I think he is very good at the 400...we have clocked him several times at sub-49 (seconds), but having to work on his start is fortune because that is something you can work. It will obviously pay off in his 200, too.”

Tuitt isn’t sweating over starts, though. He looks at every race as a gradual progression.

“Instead of false starting, I would rather get a slow start and win in the end,” Tuitt said.

Tuitt adapted to the stress of running multiple events easier than most, because McAfee set a standard for all his sprinters to follow. In order to dominate, Tuitt has had to endure the pressure of being a major part of team scoring.

“He had never really run the 400,” McAfee said. “We put him in the 300 indoor, and he did very well in that, and he just barely missed qualifying. We had our first meet January 10, and two weeks later he was running the 300 and the mile relay. He wasn’t really receptive to running the 400 because he wasn’t in shape, but one thing we work on and stress to all of our sprinters is conditioning...we try to get all the guys in shape to handle multiple races.”

“I don’t like the 400 myself as much, but it helps me with my endurance in the 200,” Tuitt said.

McAfee is gearing his team up for a possible state championship, to add to this year’s league title. To accomplish that, Tuitt will have to do well in the relays as well as the individual sprints.

“First we have to figure out



PHOTO/SUE ANN JOHNSON

Darrin Tuitt has one of the nation’s top sprint times this year.

what events we want to try to have him qualify for. He could qualify for six, but he could only run four. We have to look at what is best for Darrin and the team,” McAfee said.

Tuitt has already thought

about what is best for East.

“I would like to be the State champ in the 100 and 200, and I would like the 4x200 and 4x400 relay teams to be state champs too,” he said.

Johnson gets invitation

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under World Championships Aug. 1-10 in Melbourne, Australia, and World University Games Aug. 21-31 in Trapani, Italy.

“It feels good to be invited to something as prestigious as this,” Johnson said. “It feels good to be one of only 66 players from across the country to be invited.”

The 6-8, 245 Johnson was notified last week of the invitation by UNCC coach Melvin Watkins. The former North Mecklenburg High star isn’t a stranger to all-star teams. In 1994, he played in the Olympic Festival, where he held his own against established college players. This time, he’ll try to use that experience to his advantage.

“When I went to the Olympic Festival, I played with a lot of sophomores in college and I was just coming out of prep school,” Johnson said. “I didn’t know that much about the college game.”

Johnson averaged 18.8 points and 8.5 rebounds as a junior and led UNCC to the Conference USA White Division title and a berth in the NCAA tournament, where the 49ers beat Georgetown in the first round of the West Regional. It was the school’s first NCAA win since UNCC made the Final Four in 1977. Johnson was named first team all-Conference USA and first team All-District.

The U.S. has earned 10 gold medals, three silver and a bronze in going 95-6 in 14 World University Games and will try for its fifth straight gold in ‘97.

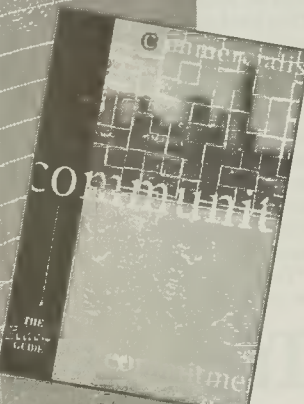
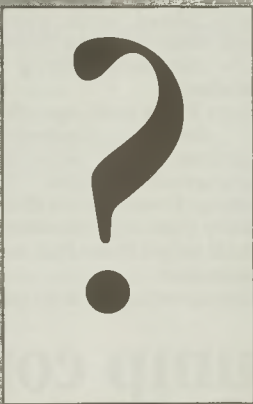
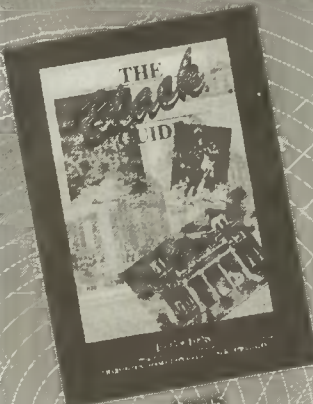
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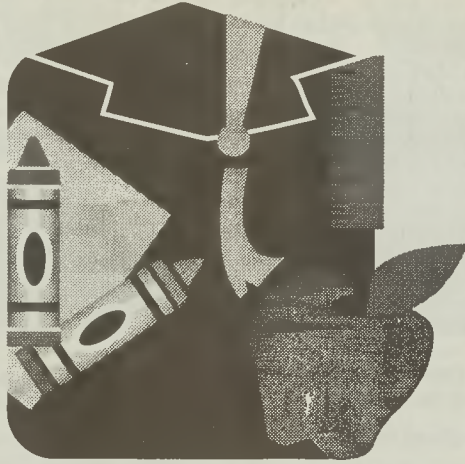
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