

No. five choice in the country

Houston picks Bobby Jones

by Jim Thomas
Asst. Sports Editor

When Bobby Jones was named to the ALL-ACC basketball team this year ahead of Maryland's Tom McMillen outraged Terp supporters said he was a political selection with the majority of sports writers based in North Carolina.

However, the Houston Rockets had no institutional ties last Tuesday when they made the UNC All American their no. 1 draft choice and no. 5 pick overall behind Bill Walton, Marvin Barnes, Tommy Burleson and John Shumate.

"I am happy and surprised," said Jones. "I have lived in the South all my life. Houston has a warm climate and I prefer the fast paced style of play. I did not know who would pick me. Phoenix and Kansas City-Omaha had contacted me. I think I can fit in pretty well with Houston. I don't know my market value, I am leaving that to my agent, Donald Dell of Washington D.C." Jones is supposed to get around \$1.4 million to sign with the Rockets.

Houston coach Johnny Egan said he chose Jones because he was the most consistent player available who filled their needs. The All-American averaged 16 points and 10 rebounds a game and shot 58% from the floor to lead Carolina to a 22-6 record and a second place finish to national champion N.C. State during the regular ACC season.

The now disbanded Carolina Cougars hold the ABA rights to Jones. The Charlotte native said he would wait and see what happens at the league meeting June 20 before he cast his lot with the ABA or NBA. Jones expressed no preference toward either league and indicated money, location, how much he could play, who the coach is and what style he plays would be the deciding factors in where he plays.

Many people were surprised the All American went so early, he had been expected to be picked in the first round but not that high.

North Carolina coach Dean Smith explained, "The pros are looking for the complete player rather than the big scorer. Jones is a pure forward, Len Elmore and

Barnes are power forwards who can also play center. Jones plays a different position, he can do so much more. He has speed, quickness, good hands and is a great rebounder.

"Egan was looking for someone who could run and play defense," said Smith, "and Bobby certainly fills that bill. Any time you are in the top five in any year you are in good shape. Bobby would not have trouble playing with any team he went to. He would help any team except one with a Jabbar."

Houston sorely needs another forward to play opposite All Star Rudy Tomjanovich. They carried four forwards during the regular season but none were up to the task.

Jack Marin was the starter in that position before being traded to the Buffalo Braves. Marin bombed in 11 points a game but provided no help on the boards.

E.C. Coleman was a promising rookie at 6-8, 225 pounds but was claimed by New Orleans in the expansion draft.

Cliff Meeley averaged 9 points and 6 rebounds a game but shot only 42 per cent.

Ron Riley played in only 36 games, contributing 3 points and 4 rebounds a game and connecting on a miserable 39 per cent from the floor.

The Rockets have one of the league's leading offenses which is built around Tomjanovich, guards Mike Newlin, Calvin Murphy and Jimmy Walker.

Some pro scouts suspect his outside shot but Jones expressed confidence in his ability to hit the 15-foot jumper. Egan said Houston has enough perimeter shooters they don't need another one. They need someone who can score inside.

The offense will take care of itself with the fast break style Houston employs. Jones was chosen more for his defense and rebounding by the porous Rockets who are also one of the NBA's worst defensive teams.

The difficulty of Dennis Wuycik in adjusting to the basic one-on-one game of the pros and the latent explosion of Robert McAdoo as the NBA's leading scorer this year had led some observers to conclude Dean Smith's team oriented style hampers Carolina players in the pros.

Jones scoffed at the notion that Smith's system puts him at a disadvantage. "You lose a lot of offensive knowledge," he said, "but you make up for it in so many other ways. People are amazed you can pass the ball and play defense when you reach the pros. From the scouts I have talked to the pros wish more people would play our style of basketball."

"Colleges serve as a minor league for the pros," said Jones. "It is a compliment to Coach Smith so many guys from Carolina have made it in the pros. He teaches us the sound, overall game not just run and gun."

The lanky Jones does not foresee any problems in adapting to the pro style of play. "I am prepared for anything," he said. "The biggest adjustment will be surviving the grinding 82-game schedule without any broken noses. The competition will be much greater. Every night I will be facing someone better."

"I will have to be aggressive or get blown off the court. I really admire Dave Cowens' attitude," said Jones whose style of play is similar to the Boston redhead. "He really works at it. He considers basketball more a profession than a game. Cowens is a lot like Wuycik, he is dedicated and does a lot of preparation for each game."

Hustle and determination are synonymous with Bobby Jones. At 6-9, 215 pounds, Jones, like Cowens, possesses unusual quickness for a big man, but at 230 pounds the Celtic center is 15 pounds heavier than the UNC forward.

There is some concern whether the lithe Jones is strong enough to take on the big forwards in the NBA. Smith discounted the notion. "I certainly think Bobby is rugged enough to handle the strong forwards," he said. "After all, he guarded the opponents' best big man during the season for us."

The physical wars of the pros do not begin in earnest for three months, in the meantime Jones will lift weights and scrimmage twice a week to keep in shape. Bobby is going to summer school here for three more weeks before he goes home to Charlotte to get married in July. The honeymoon is over when rookie camp starts in September.



Bobby Jones and Tommy Burleson battle for rebound. Jones was first round choice of Houston Rockets in Tuesday's collegiate draft. Burleson was chosen by Seattle Supersonics.

ACC players rated high in professional draft

by Bill Kay
Sports Editor

If you have any doubts about the big man's value in the NBA, just ask the pro scouts.

The first five picks in this year's NBA pro draft were all big men of awesome ability and stature. Portland officially drafted Mr. Bruin, Bill Walton, No. 1, who recently signed a multi-year pact of \$2.5 million. Philadelphia took Marvin "Bad News" Barnes of Providence, Seattle, which claimed the number three drafting position by trading away veteran Dick Snyder for Cleveland's number three slot, came away with N.C. State's Tommy Burleson, which came as no surprise to the basketball world. Philadelphia drafted Bruin killer John Shumate of Notre Dame. Last but not least, Carolina's Bobby Jones was chosen number five by Houston.

Other prominent ACC stars to go in the first round included Maryland's Tom McMillen and Len Elmore who went to Buffalo and Washington (formerly Capital) respectively. McMillen was the number nine pick while Elmore was chosen thirteenth.

Carolina's backcourt ace Darrell Elston went relatively high in the draft as he was picked by Atlanta in the third round and Wake Forest's quick guard Tony Byers was gone by round five as he was snagged by Buffalo.

It is not unjustified to say that the ACC is recognized as the most prolific collegiate basketball conference in the land. Just as the ACC faithfuls have been kept in awe all season long by the likes of Burleson, Jones, Elmore and McMillen, not to mention the amazing David Thompson, who passed up a dynamite offer from the fledgling Philadelphia franchise to stay with powerful State, the pro scouts lost their appetite over the prospects of drafting the ACC's big men.

Two of the top five draft picks, Jones and Burleson, are ACC bred and never before have so many ACC players been in top demand by the professionals. If David

Thompson had accepted the offer made to him by Philadelphia, ACC schools would have filled five of the first 15 selections in the NBA draft.

UNC Head Coach Dean Smith wasn't surprised to see Carolina's Bobby Jones selected so high because he rates Bobby as "probably the most complete team player in the college ranks."

No one can doubt that Bobby was selected by a team that needs more quickness and inside power under the boards; and despite observers' opinions that he can't make the outside shot, Bobby feels confident he can hit it with practice.

Commenting on Houston's style of play, "Egan wants me to be a big rebounder and get out on the fast break, they play team ball as UNC does, like passing," Jones said.

Perhaps a surprising choice to some observers, Jones' high selection hardly comes as a surprise to ACC fans who have followed his exploits of opponents over the last three years.

Tommy Burleson

Tommy Burleson, State's giant killer, was honored to be selected third, but it hardly comes as a surprise.

After mastering the likes of Len Elmore in the ACC Tournament, he caught the national spotlight with his magnificent performance against Walton in the super semi-final game of the NCAA finals in which he battled the heralded Walton to a near standoff.

Averaging 18.2 points, 12.2 rebounds and many blocked shots per game, he became the mainstay around which State built a powerhouse. Often overshadowed by Thompson, Burleson gained the accolades of many astute observers with his consistent play and uninhibited desire.

One of those, someone by the name of Bill Russell, perhaps the best player in the game's history, was attracted by Tommy's unusual enthusiasm and competitive spirit, adjectives usually applied to Russell himself.

Thus, Tommy is Seattle's property if they

can win the war with the ABA's Indiana club which also drafted him.

A Bill Russell-Tommy Burleson partnership, or better said, student-teacher relationship, could be advantageous to both since Russell loves to teach (and who better is there to instruct a young big man?) and Burleson wants to learn. Seattle had Tommy in mind for awhile as they traded away one of its best players, guard Dick Snyder, to Cleveland in exchange for the first round pick in order to select Burleson.

Said ex-NBA great and now Seattle's coach and general manager Bill Russell: "The thing I like most of all about him is his attitude. He comes to play every night. His potential is overwhelming and he comes from a winner. He knows what it takes."

Len Elmore

Perhaps the most surprising selection was

that Maryland's Len Elmore wasn't taken until twelve other players had been chosen. Philadelphia, which had the first choice in Tuesday's draft, selected Barnes over Elmore, two very similar styles in that they both are of the power center type. One would have speculated, however, that with Maryland's success this year and last in the powerful ACC, and the fact that Elmore was the most intimidating player in the league, he would have gone higher in the draft. He should fit in well with Washington's power styled play however and it probably is to his advantage that he play with the likes of Elvin Hayes and the ailing Wes Unseld, who remains a question mark. And, strangely enough, Elmore resembles Unseld more than any other NBA player in his aggressiveness and outside shooting. Elmore is the better athlete and the more intense rebounder and shot blocker.

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