

# Sports

## Prep titans clash and look to future

By **PATTON McDOWELL**  
Assistant Sports Editor

For the basketball fan with an eye for historical perspective, the Thanksgiving holiday featured a pair of high school scrimmages that may very well be remembered as the simple beginning of something really big.

The Indian River (Va.) Braves met the Northeastern (N.C.) Eagles in what would appear to the casual observer to be just a couple of preseason warm-ups. A closer inspection, however, reveals that the games featured the two best high school players in the country, UNC-bound Kenny Williams from Northeastern, and Georgetown-bound Alonzo Mourning from Indian River.

Could a high school matchup prophesy the future for two players before they hit the big time? For the fortunate few who were able to witness both matchups between the future Hoya and the future Tar Heel, "big time" is a label that clearly applies to both.

Only 45 minutes separate the two schools, so arranging the matchup was not all that difficult. Indian River coach Bill Lassiter only asked that the first of the scrimmages be closed to the public, and the second, in Elizabeth City, be open for all to see.

Despite the lack of fans at the home of the Braves, the feeling in the air was genuinely electric. Reporters and TV crews tried in vain to catch a glimpse of the first contest, but each door and window was guarded by Indian River personnel.

Mourning entered the contest as the nation's top high school player, having dispatched all challengers on the national summer camp circuit.

Williams, although regarded very near the top of the prep crop by most, was very much a mystery player, having never attended a publicity-attracting summer camp.

While their heights are separated by only an inch, the playing styles of Mourning and Williams are very different. Indian River played almost exclusively man-to-man defense, and Mourning did pick up Williams at first. But Mourning guarded Williams for only a short time, while Northeastern employed a zone, thus ending the chances of a consistent Williams versus Mourning battle.

With Mourning guarding him early, Williams played with an intensity of a man trying to emerge from the unknown. Despite confronting the spectacle of having the country's premier shot-blocker staring him right in the face, Williams proceeded to score the Eagles' first 14 points, all from outside of 15 feet, and all over Mourning's outstretched hands. The battle in the low-post never materialized, as Williams brought Mourning to the perimeter and showed an incredible outside touch for a big man, drilling two 22-foot 3-pointers in his initial outburst.

Mourning did not try to match the perimeter game of his counterpart, but instead showed that not only does he play in the paint, he owns it. While Williams played one forward spot on the back of the zone, along with 6-foot-8 and 6-foot-6 teammates, their combined efforts could not stop the powerful Mourning. Outside of a couple of 15-footers, Mourning displayed an array of half-hooks, reverse layups, and power jams that on one occasion nearly folded the supports of the terrified rim.

Mourning's five slams went a long way toward his final 34-point total, and he added eight rebounds and nine blocked shots to his first-game totals. He had indeed set a standard of greatness, but Williams was determined to match it.

The silky forward scored 18 of his

team's first 22 points, all from the outside, but a couple of plays early in the second quarter typified Williams' abilities as more than just a great shooter.

As the Braves attempted to press the Eagles full court, the ball was thrown to Williams as he ran downcourt. A 6-foot guard appeared to take perfect position on Northeastern's tallest player for a charge right at the half-court line. Williams had time for one dribble, and then instead of the almost certain contact, he whipped the ball behind his back, not losing a step, and proceeded to hit a pull-up 17-footer.

His agility and shooting touch were indeed impressive, but Williams showed that he could rattle the rim as well. He finished with five dunks to match Mourning, including an acrobatic reverse slam to finish a break and a spectacular two-handed tap-slam in traffic. Williams finished the first game with 41 points, including four 3-pointers, 15 rebounds and five blocks. Both players had set an incredible standard, and as the word leaked out about the first contest, the second game quickly became the biggest sports event Elizabeth City had seen in a long while.

Four television crews roamed the sidelines, and 2,000 people crammed every inch of Northeastern's stands in anticipation of the game, most arriving more than an hour early to claim a seat. While the players created the intensity at the first contest, the fans had now arrived, and their excitement belied the fact that this was just a scrimmage.

Williams ignited the crowd at the very start with a 3-point shot as he floated to the left of the key.

The weight of expectations of the home fans seemed to grow heavy on Williams, however, and his shooting touch went cold. The entire Eagle team got caught up in setting him up to score, but all seemed to suffer for it. Despite terrible shooting, Williams still managed to score 27 points, including 2-of-3 from 3-point land. For the second consecutive game, he did manage to out-rebound Mourning, 16 to eight. Williams had excelled

at Indian River, but now Mourning was here to show he could play away from home as well.

Alonzo missed his first shot, but would not miss on any of his next 14. He again shredded the Eagles' interior defense for six slams, including a pair of alley-oops. Williams' lone slam of the evening came on a thunderous recovery of Mourning's partial block of another Eagle shooter.

As impressive as he was on offense, Mourning put on a clinic on the art of shot-blocking, finishing with 11. On one occasion, Mourning nearly hurled a teammate to slap an Eagle shot into the front court, toppling himself in the process, but leading to a successful fast break. Williams had launched himself for dunks against Mourning on two occasions, and both times drew the foul. The third time, however, Mourning stuffed Williams' slam against the backboard, leaving Williams to shake his head in disgust.

No official score was kept at either game, but Indian River would likely have won on both occasions. Though a one-on-one matchup did not really take place, both Williams and Mourning showed that they deserve their status among the nation's best, and gave an exciting preview of what could be colossal UNC-Georgetown contests of the future.

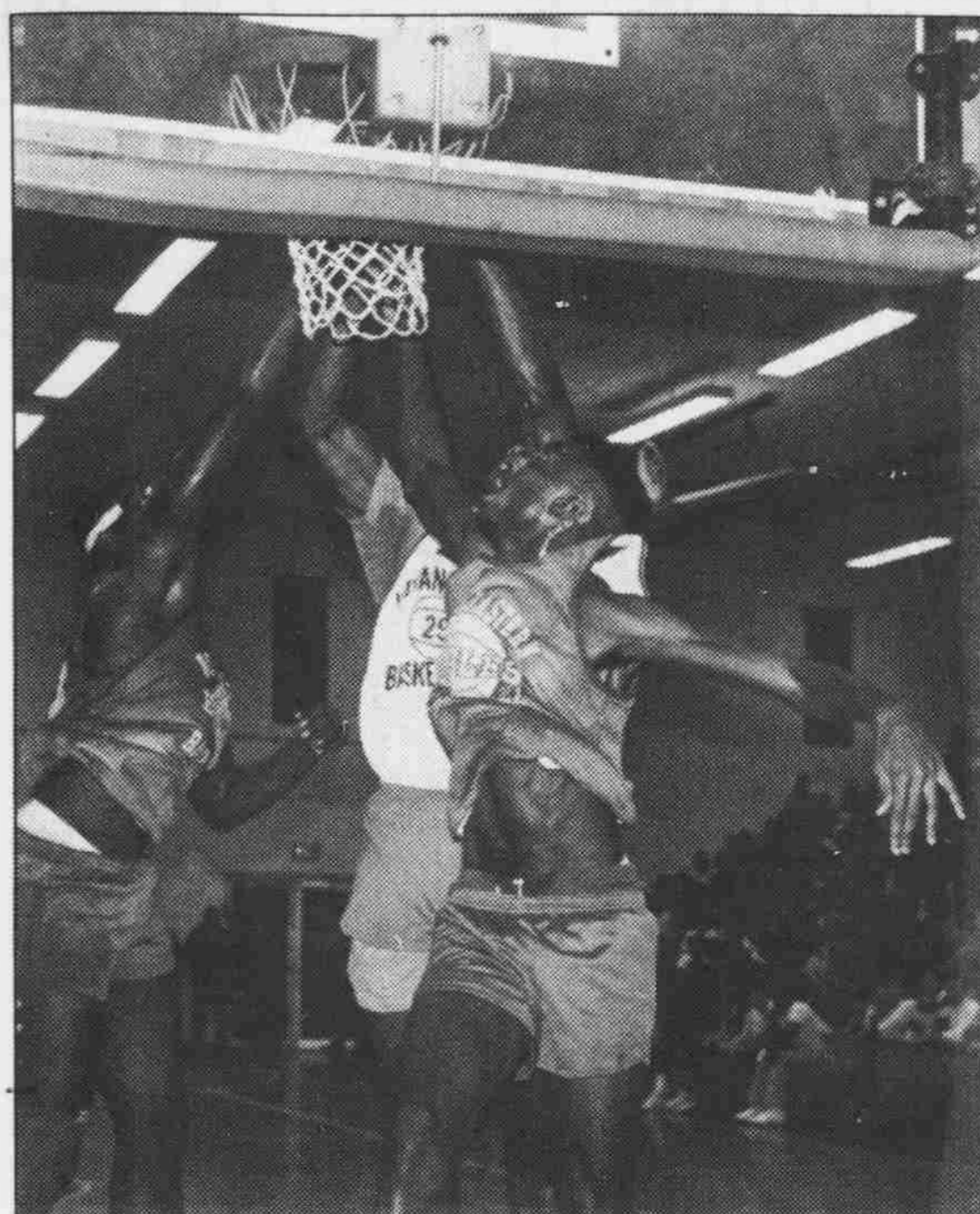


Photo courtesy of The Daily Advance  
**Kenny Williams (right) and Alonzo Mourning (29) are the nation's best**

## Falcone unique offensive talent

By **BRENDAN MATHEWS**  
Staff Writer

After the UNC field hockey team finished third in last year's NCAA tournament, senior forward Maryellen Falcone was faced with a big decision.

Because she sat out her freshman year with a knee injury, Falcone still had one season of eligibility left. She had to decide whether she wanted to graduate in the spring or to stay at North Carolina for one more shot at the NAAs.

"Part of me wanted to come back to win the nationals," Falcone said. "But a part also didn't want to lose like that again."

After being ranked No. 1 for most of last season, the Tar Heels fell short of winning the NAAs by one game, when they were beaten by New Hampshire in the first round of last year's Final Four.

Although she had her doubts, Falcone decided to stay. For most of the season, that choice seemed a wise one, as UNC rolled through the year with but a single loss, and earned its second consecutive Final Four appearance. In the semifinal game, the Tar Heels knocked off ODU, but then met heartbreak once more, dropping an overtime decision to Maryland in the finals.

En route to the NAAs, Falcone made a major contribution to the success of the team. She scored 16 goals and added five assists, good for fourth in scoring on the team with 21 points.

"I think I've been doing pretty well," Falcone said. "I've had some good games, had some bad ones. You're never going to have a perfect game. Field hockey is a game of mistakes. The team that wins is the one who makes the fewest mistakes."

If this is true, then the Tar Heels obviously made few mistakes all year long. UNC was the No. 1 seed in the tournament, and played relatively error-free, but mistakes cost them in the climactic match.

Falcone's road to the NAAs

began back in the ninth grade when she first started playing field hockey. "It was the only program offered for girls in the fall," Falcone said. "I played basketball in the winter, ran track in the spring. Mom and Dad talked me into it, and I had fun. It was something to do."

What may have started out as just "something to do" brought Falcone a great deal of notoriety while still at Trumbull High in Trumbull, Ct. She was an all-state player and as a senior was named field hockey player of the year by the New York Daily News.

She made up her mind to pursue field hockey in college rather than her other sports. "I was most interested and best at field hockey," Falcone said. "I didn't like basketball enough to play in college, and I'm too short anyway."

Falcone signed with UNC in February 1983. She was attracted by "the weather, the program and the mix of academics and athletics." In July of that year she came to campus to begin practice, but on the first day she tore ligaments in her knee, requiring an operation and putting her on crutches for months. As a result, she was redshirted and spent her freshman year watching the games from the sidelines.

Once back on her feet, Falcone quickly made a name for herself as a dangerous offensive threat. Her overall totals of 48 goals and nine assists place her third on the UNC career scoring list.

"She's a goal scorer," coach Karen Shelton said. "She leads the team by putting pressure on the opposing goal and by her positive attitude. She's a threat on both offense and defense. She really works to get the ball back."

Falcone's style on the field has made it even more difficult for opposing defenses to contain her. "Maryellen is a very unorthodox player," Shelton said. "The way she receives the ball and her stickwork are not typical of how men or women

play field hockey. It makes it very difficult for defenses to mark her because she does the unexpected. She's very tough to defend against."

Falcone admitted that the hope of reaching the Final Four kept the team fired up as the season wore on and the team spent time away from UNC on long road trips.

"We traveled a lot this year, lived out of hotels," Falcone said. "We would eat, sleep, play field hockey. It can be really draining. But we'd always get really excited when it's time to play. In a way you look forward to the end of the season, but that always helped to get you up for a game when you know that there's only a few left."

In December, Falcone, a recreation administration major, will graduate, but after that she's undecided about what she's going to do.

"Right now I'm focusing on graduation and hockey," Falcone said. "I'm interested in recreation, and I love kids, so I'd like to find something that has that."

In the past Falcone has coached at soccer camps as well as doing work with the elderly and in drug rehabilitation.

Heading into the Final Four, Falcone thought the veteran character of UNC's squad would give the Tar Heels a win.

"We have the experience of being to the Final Four once before," she said. "And that experience will give us the edge."

Those hopes were dashed thanks to a lucky Terrapin goal two Sundays ago. But Falcone's field hockey career may not be over. She was named an All-American, along with teammates Lori Bruney and Tracey Yurgin, and was invited to try out for the Junior National Team. Falcone has not yet decided whether to accept that invitation, but if she does, her disappointment at falling short of the national title will undoubtedly be channeled into a superlative effort on the field.

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