

BASKETBALL PREVIEWS

Trojans In Search Of Nucleus To Battle In New 2-A Ranks

BY JOHNNY CRAIG

West Brunswick has won outright and shared the Three Rivers 3-A Conference basketball championship the past two seasons while having reached the district playoffs for three straight years.

However, "that was then, this is now" (the current popular movie title) may indicate that life at the top of the league may be a little rougher for the Trojans.

For the first time in school history, West Brunswick has dropped in classification to the 2-A ranks but by no means will the competition get any easier.

Just how successful the Trojans will be this season depends on how soon head coach Ronnie Champion is able to find a half-dozen players who can play together and work well as a team.

Although the majority of the 16 players on the roster have been in the basketball program for three to four years and know Champion's system, the seventh-year coach faces what will probably be his biggest rebuilding task since coming to West Brunswick.

"We have been practicing and working hard for nearly three weeks now and I believe the players are doing their best, but we're just not mentally ready," said a concerned Champion.

"We practice here in the West Brunswick gym every day. Our concentration must be in some other gym some place else. I just hope we can get the two together in time for next week's opener."

The key to West Brunswick's season is finding six or seven players who can work together and, according to Champion, the sooner these players emerge, the better.

"The problem is that we don't have anyone back who has played together all that much," said Champion.

While personnel appears to be a problem, Champion states that the Trojans' outside shooting is much improved over last year.

"In past years we were rather

strong inside and were between fair and so-so from the outside. This season will be the opposite since we are definitely not powerful underneath the basket."

West Brunswick's fortunes will lie in the hands of five seniors and a junior who will likely see plenty of playing time.

Guards Chris Johnson (jr.) returns with a 3.3 ppg (points per game) scoring average from a year ago including a season high 11 points against state 2-A runnerup Whiteville.

Scott Street (5-10) will likely be at wing where he averaged 3.2 ppg last

year and was a consistent scorer in every game he played.

Gary Gore (forward), the tallest Trojan at 6-foot-3 and an All-Three Rivers Conference honorable mention selection from last year, will be counted to improve upon his 2.9 ppg average of 1984-85.

Aiding Gore in the middle will be Curtis Hill, a 6-2 forward who saw only limited playing time last season.

Michael Johnson, quarterback of the Trojan football team this fall, returns at wing. Johnson averaged a mere 1.3 ppg last year but had a season high 10 points against Hoggard.

Jeff Marlowe (5-6) is another top Trojan guard prospect. Marlowe averaged only a point per contest last year but drew several starting assignments near midseason.

Marlowe has gained nearly 10 pounds from a year ago with the help of an extensive off-season weight training program.

Top newcomers to the team include guard Craig Johnson (5-6, jr.), forward Donnie Vansteen (6-0, jr.) and senior Derek Long.

Long is in his first year playing basketball while having been an outstanding shortstop on the Trojan baseball team.

Rounding out the roster is a group of juniors and seniors who will also be counted upon to contribute.

Providing backup at post will be Randy Brown (sr.), Jeff Clemmons (sr.) and Justin Turner (jr.) while Shane Hardee (sr.), Raymond Green (jr.), Hugh Price (jr.) and Joey Stanaland (sr.) will be at wings.

While there may be a number of questions concerning experience, the Trojans gameplan will continue as in years past—pressure defense and fast-paced offense.

"Our teams have always performed much better when running rather than playing a set-up, methodical style brand of basketball," said Champion. "We will continue to use lots of movement on offense and concentrate on getting the ball up the court."

Pressure will be the key to the Trojan defense with Champion preferring a zone rather than man-to-man.

"We looked better out of a zone defense last year but the five years prior we played mostly man-to-man. In our style of defense, everybody plays practically every position so regardless of what we run, there will be lots of pressure."

The Trojans were scheduled to scrimmage 4-A E.A. Laney in Wilmington on Tuesday and Champion had hopes that the preseason matchup would answer a lot of questions.

"I hope our game at Laney will help wake us up and make us aware that just because we won or shared the conference championship the past two years, it doesn't mean repeating will be an automatic thing for this season."

Champion sees the new Waccamaw Conference as a strong league with Whiteville, East Bladen and West Columbus as the teams to beat.

"I think this league will be tougher than the Three Rivers Conference. There are more teams and the quality of competition is higher."

There will be no post-season tour-

namment to decide playoff berths but rather the top three teams in the regular season advancing to the district playoffs.

Newcomers to the Trojans non-conference schedule will be Topsail and Myrtle Beach, S.C. West Brunswick continues to play Hoggard in nonconference action and will again host its annual Christmas tournament Dec. 27-28.

Participating in this year's tourney with the Trojans will be South Brunswick, Acme-Delco and East Montgomery.

East Montgomery is located near Mount Gilead and is coached by former UNC-Wilmington standout Bobby Martin.

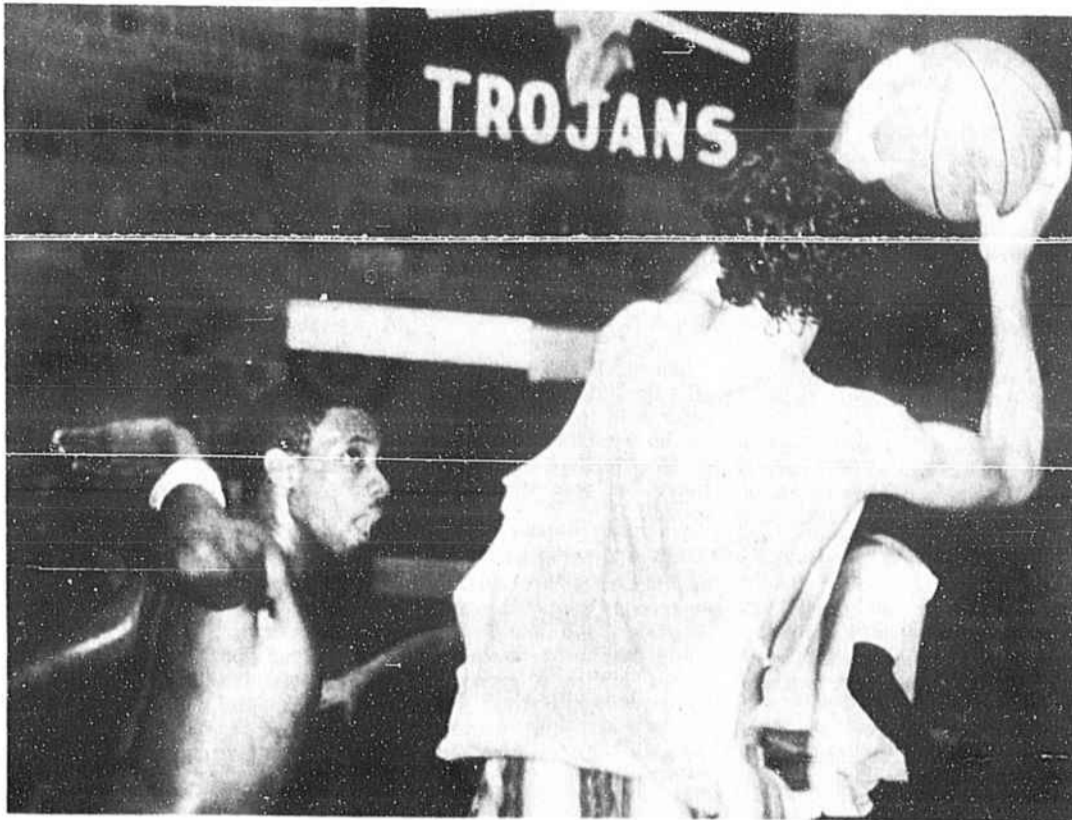
Champion has compiled a 109-49 record while at West Brunswick with Trojan teams also capturing two conference championships and four district appearances.

1985-86 West Brunswick Trojans Basketball Schedule

Date	Opponent
Nov. 26	Topsail
Dec. 6	Hoggard
Dec. 13	at Hoggard
Dec. 14	Myrtle Beach, SC
Dec. 16	at Topsail
Dec. 20	Whiteville*
Dec. 27-28	Trojan Christmas Tournament
Jan. 3	at East Bladen*
Jan. 7	at Fairmont*
Jan. 10	South Robeson*
Jan. 11	at Myrtle Beach
Jan. 14	at North Brunswick*
Jan. 17	at West Columbus*
Jan. 24	South Brunswick*
Jan. 28	East Bladen*
Jan. 31	at Whiteville*
Feb. 4	Fairmont*
Feb. 7	at South Robeson*
Feb. 11	North Brunswick*
Feb. 14	West Columbus*
Feb. 18	at South Brunswick*

*denotes Waccamaw 2-A Conference games.

All games begin at 5 p.m. in order of junior varsity, girls and boys. The nonconference game with Myrtle Beach will begin at 6:30 p.m. without a j.v. contest.



KEEP AWAY—West Brunswick forward Gary Gore (with ball) looks for an open passing lane while being guarded by Randy Brown (left). The Trojans, defending co-champions of the old Three Rivers Conference, open the season at home Tuesday against Topsail.

Lady Trojans' League Hopes Ride On Speed, Depth

BY JOHNNY CRAIG

A quicker, deeper West Brunswick Lady Trojans team appears set to improve upon last season's 11-11 record with hopes of landing in the district playoffs for the second straight year.

The blend of four returning starters along with three veterans and a trio of impressive newcomers has given West Brunswick coach Ronnie Jenkins high hopes of improvement.

"Things are going real good for us thus far. We are a good deal quicker compared to last year and appear to have added depth," said Jenkins. "Should several freshmen come around and develop we could go possibly nine or 10 girls deep."

Returning to lead the way is senior Sheila Johnson, a 5-foot-10 forward who averaged 19 ppg last year and had a season-high 33 points against Clinton. Johnson is a two-time All-Three Rivers Conference selection and will be counted on heavily for both scoring and rebounding.

Also returning is center Jane Gause (6-0) who averaged 4 ppg last season. Gause also had a season-high

11 points against Clinton and will be the Lady Trojans' main inside cog.

Forward Camella Hill and wing Julie Benton are also returning starters.

Hill (5-10) will need to improve upon a 1.4 ppg scoring average from last year while Benton, who grew an inch over the offseason to 5-9, will be an outside threat and will surpass her 1.4 ppg average of last season.

Jackie Evans (5-0, guard), Ann Stanley (5-7, forward) and Dorothy Gore (5-7, wing) saw considerable action last season and will be depended upon for depth.

Top newcomers include three freshmen guards—Geraldine Hill, Kathy McMullen and Suzanne Evans.

Rounding out the Lady Trojans' roster are guards Penelope and Priscilla Tippett and forwards Shannon Bardon and Linda Knop.

Although Jenkins feels that this edition of the Lady Trojans may not be the best he's had while coaching at West Brunswick, the potential to be vastly improved over last season is there.

"We have the ability to go much further than we did last year. We finished third in the Three Rivers Conference a year ago but were knocked from the district playoffs in the first round," said Jenkins. "We look for a longer season this go around."

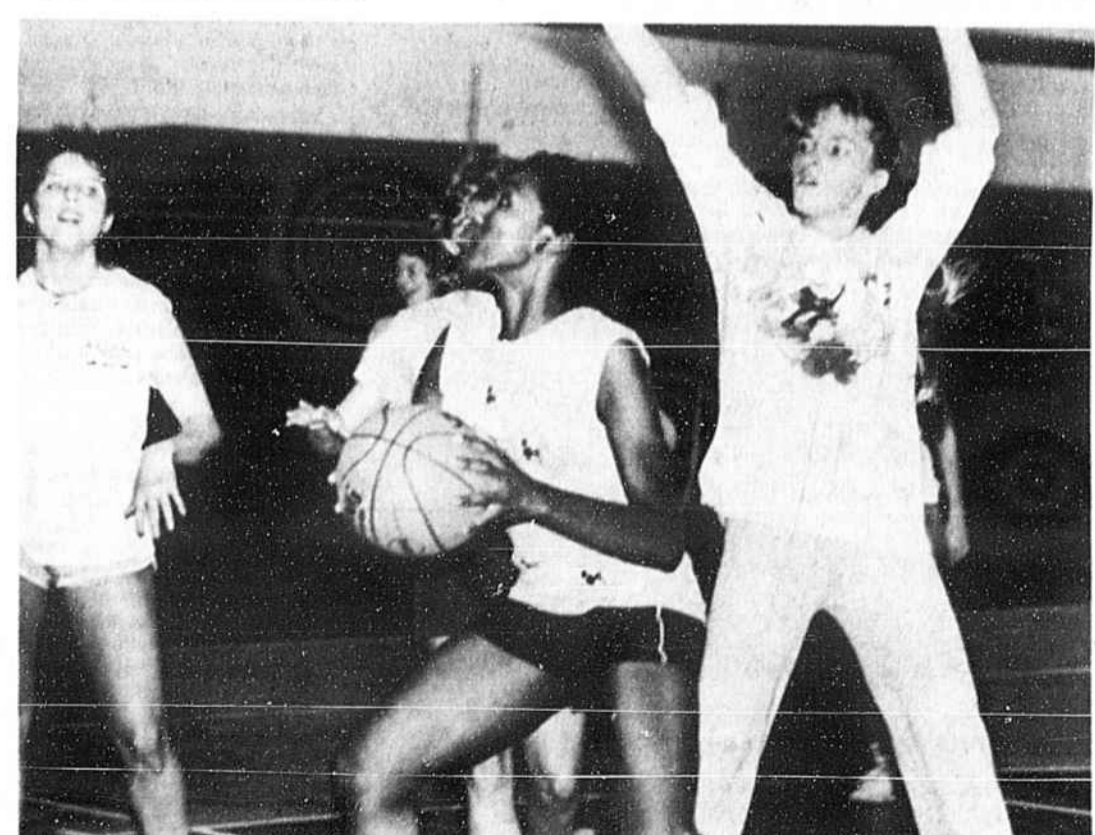
"Our defense is much stronger. Due to our quickness we will be able to play more man-to-man rather than rely on a zone defense."

"Our offense is still a little weak but I feel it will come around by the time the season begins," added Jenkins.

The Waccamaw Conference will be one of the toughest in the state according to Jenkins with the winner having a chance to go all the way to the 2-A finals.

"There are about five teams that have a chance to finish in the top three and make the playoffs. I feel we have a good chance with South Robeson, West Columbus, East Bladen and North Brunswick all being in contention."

"We just need to improve on our overall game. We have a tough early nonconference schedule against Topsail and Hoggard. Hopefully this will groom us into playoff contenders and in the thick of the conference race."



PREPARE FOR OPENER—Camella Hill (with ball) goes up for a layup between Shannon Bardon (left) and Kathy McMullen (right). The Lady Trojans open their season Tuesday at home against Topsail.

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