

**Big Apple League**

**Rockets, Players meet for first-half title**

By DAVID BULLA  
Chronicle Sports Editor

Rocket point guard Louis "Choc" Lowery ravaged the Domino's Pizza defense as if it were a fine Italian meal last Saturday.

Lowery delivered the Rockets to a 96-85 win in the battle of Big Apple unbeaten at Hanes Hosiery Recreation Center. His ability to penetrate proved decisive since the Rockets prefer the high-percentage shot.

"If Choc penetrates, they're hard to stop," observed Jeff Jones, the former UNC-Asheville guard-forward and standout of the Big Apple's C.J. Jocks. "But if you shut down Choc, you can take them out of their inside game and force them to shoot outside."

Although Domino's built a 42-38 halftime lead behind the combined 26-point effort of Danny Womack and Milton Vaughn, Lowery was unstoppable in the second half and led the defending league champions to their third win in as many outings. He scored 12 of his 18 points in the second half.

"Before we can be effective I have to penetrate," said Lowery, who handed out 13 assists. "I also think we played together as a team today and kept the pressure on them with our defense."

Lowery, who played collegiately at Johnson C. Smith, pointed to the Rockets' depth as being another difference in the game. Former Parkland standout Terry Gunter came off the bench to score 12 points and former East standout Sam Porter added 10. On a day when forward Mike "Pop Bottle" Thomas stayed in foul trouble and teammate Charles Douthit made an early exit, the Rockets needed the contributions of Gunter and Porter.

"We didn't have as much depth," Domino's Coach Tracey Meredith said. "It hurt us when we had to go man-to-man without (Harrison) Finklea."

Finklea, a 6-foot-8 center who went to UNCC and Pfeiffer, was unable to attend the game because of his summer internship in Charlotte.

"If Finklea had been here, things would have been different," Meredith said. "Then Pu-Pie (Kevin White) went out and we didn't have an extra big man. So I think fatigue had a lot to do with it."

White, who plays football at Johnson C. Smith, received an inadvertent elbow from teammate Vaughn early in the second half. White suffered a cut under his right eye that caused swelling and he was unable to return to the game.

Additionally, Vaughn fouled out with 5:45 left with his team down 69-64. Lowery, Gunter and Porter combined for 20 points the rest of the way to stretch the Rockets' Big Apple unbeaten streak to 10 games. They posted a 7-0 record last season.

The season's showdown Saturday at 3 p.m. with the Players, who routed the Bulls 89-61. The Players won the Eastern Division title last year, but lost to the Rockets (then nicknamed the Lakers) 93-85 for the league championship.

This season Commissioner Walter Funderburk has broken the season into halves. So Saturday's Player-Rocket winner will capture the first-half title. The first- and second-half champions will play for the league crown Aug. 2 at 8 p.m.

"Last year we had them by 16 points early in the second half," Player Coach Melvin Massey said. "Then we tried to hold the ball and their defense got them back in the game."

Massey hopes Terry Strickland, one of the league's top players, will be available Saturday. He may have to work.

Rocket center Rob Little said Domino's did expose his team's weakness, a lack of outside shooting. Still, the Rockets appear to have enough overall talent and team unity to overcome that weakness.

"They definitely exposed our weak outside game," said Little, who played his high school ball at Anderson and Parkland and his college ball at North Carolina Central. "But it doesn't look like we have to shoot from the outside the way Choc delivers. We do have Carl Redd for outside shooting, but we never had to really use him today."

"We didn't panic trailing at halftime. Pu-Pie talked a lot of junk, but a game lasts 32 minutes and we knew all we had to do was stay close."

Mike Linney, the former Virginia Union standout, led the Rockets with 20 points. Linney was responsible for keeping his team close in the first half. He scored 11 points before halftime. Little added 14.

Meanwhile, Douthit left the game at halftime



Domino's Roger Mason draws a foul from Hansel Hentz; Mason scored 19 points, but it wasn't enough as the Rockets remained unbeaten (photo by James Parker).

complaining of a lack of playing time. The Rockets didn't miss the former North Davidson star in the second half, but that might not be the case against the Players.

"He has to realize it's his first year with us," said Little, a former Harlem Globetrotter. "He played poorly the last game with no points and fouled out. I suppose he should be glad we asked him back."

"But Charles is a good player. I just think he has to get used to the team concept."

Womack led Domino's with 23 points. Roger Mason, who, like Womack, played at Winston-Salem State, added 19 and Vaughn had 18.

Eddie Jordan, who played at Gardner-Webb and Johnson C. Smith, led the Players' balanced attack with 16 points. Former Wake Forest standout Alvis Rogers had 15, Strickland scored 14 and Tracey Moore added 10. Scottie Johnson led the winless Bulls with 14 points.

In other games, the C.J. Jocks ran their record to 2-1 with a 101-98 win over the Bucks. Charles Paul led the Jocks with 28 points. Jones and Waldo Hauser added 22 each. Elsworth Turner, the former North Carolina A&T quarterback, led the Bucks with 20.

"We played real good for three quarters and three minutes," said Jones, the league's scoring leader with a 28.7 average. "We were up by 20 and the next thing I know they had cut it to one. Credit them because we thought they were going to give up and they didn't."

Winston-Salem's Finest recorded its first victory with a 75-68 decision over winless Hanes. Harry Davis led the way with 25 points. Luther "Ticky" Burden added 17.

Notes: Funderburk expects a standing-room-only crowd for Saturday's Players-Rockets game. He advises spectators to arrive early. Rodney Scott, the 6-3 rising senior at North, was in attendance last week. He was just back from the UNC Basketball Camp, where his team won the camp championship. North teammates Mike Bell and Anthony Ingram also attended the camp. North girls' Coach Gene Malloy suited up for Winston-Salem's Finest after keeping score the first two weeks. Malloy was county Coach of the Year after guiding the Lady Vikings to the state quarterfinals.

**Big Apple Summaries**

**HANES (68)** - Scales 10, Holmes 10, B. McCants 10, C. Carmichael 7, W. Baskins 7, L. Jackson 6, J. Walker 6, W. Dell 6, Jerry Springs 2.

**W-S FINEST (75)** - Harry Davis 25, Luther Burden 17, Dwayne Aikens 7, T. Carter 6, Gene Malloy 5, John Watkins 2. Halftime: W-S Finest, 34-31.

**BUCKS (98)** - Elsworth Turner 20, Calvin Edwards 17, Kevin Edwards 16, Leon Williams 16, Third McCummings 12, Johnnie Coe 5, M. Lomax 4, E. Jefferies 2.

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**STANDINGS**

TEAM	W	L
Rockets	3	0
Players	3	0
Domino's	2	1
C.J. Jocks	2	1
Bucks	1	2
W-S Finest	1	2
Bulls	0	3
Hanes	0	3

**Last Week's Results**

Rockets 96, Domino's Pizza 85; Winston-Salem's Finest 75, Hanes 68; Players 89, Bulls 61; C.J. Jocks 101, Bucks 88.

**Saturday's Games**

W-S Finest v. C.J. Jocks 10:30 a.m.; Bulls v. Hanes 11:00 a.m.; Bucks v. Domino's 1:30 p.m.; Players v. Rockets 3 p.m. (Note: The end of the first half.)

**SCORING LEADERS**

PLAYER	TEAM	Avg.
Jeff Jones	Jocks	28.7
Harry Davis	W-S Finest	24.7
Leon Williams	Bucks	24.7
Milton Vaughn	Domino's	23.0
Terry Strickland	Players	22.0
Danny Womack	Domino's	22.0
Luther Burden	W-S Finest	18.5
Mike Linney	Rockets	18.0
Scottie Johnson	Bulls	17.3
Mike Thomas	Rockets	17.3
Waldo Hauser	Jocks	15.7
Brian Laake	Bulls	15.5
Eddie Jordan	Players	15.0
Robert Little	Rockets	15.0
Louis Lowery	Rockets	14.7
Elton Koonce	Domino's	13.7
Sidney Wilkins	Players	12.3
Elsworth Turner	Bucks	12.0
Sam Porter	Rockets	11.7
Reggie McCummings	Bucks	11.5
Alvis Rogers	Players	11.5
Charles Paul	Jocks	10.0

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