

# Williams-led All-Stars wallop Charlotte by 12 in NBA Pro-Am

By RANDY PETTITT  
Chronicle Sports Editor

CHARLOTTE - You know you're in trouble when half of you team shows up. And suppose one of them has the flu and you're taking on one of the best teams in the league to boot.

Enough reason to contemplate staying home in bed on a Saturday morning for a few extra winks.

But the Winston-Salem Chronicle All-Stars overcame their overwhelming handicaps, emerging with a courageous 126-114 win over Charlotte-Budweiser in the NBA Pro-Am of Charlotte last weekend at Johnson C. Smith University.

Flu-riddled Leon Williams emerged the unlikely hero, scoring 44 points and providing the offensive spark to the Winston-Salem team that was running half its cylinders. Several players were unable to play because they had to work, leaving only six to carry the load.

With the short-handed victory, Coach Walter Funderburk was left almost as amazed as Charlotte-Budweiser.

"I knew these guys had it in them, but what they did Saturday was spectacular," Funderburk said.

"All six guys gave a 110 percent. You name it, and they were doing it. Diving and hustling after loose balls, saving it out of bounds. It was truly amazing the way they played their hearts out."

Williams, who hit some very timely three-pointers to keep Winston in the game early on, was doubtful all week.

"Leon had been sick with the flu all week long," Funderburk said.

"But I ask him if he could play, and he said, 'I'm ready.' That's just his competitive nature."

"I think a lot of guys would have stayed home in the bed, but he played one heck of a ballgame to be sick all week."



Leon Williams drives around the competition in last season's Coca Cola NBA Pro-Am of Charlotte. Williams shook off the flu bug Saturday and scored 44 points to lead Winston-Salem past Charlotte-Budweiser (photo by James Parker).

Funderburk said the whole team displayed uncanny character.

"We got down by twelve in the first quarter, but these guys just decided that they weren't going to give it away. They showed a lot of maturity and pride."

### Popular Underdogs

The Charlotte-biased crowd at Johnson C. Smith University eventually joined a small contingent of Winston-Salem fans in cheering on the underdog Chronicle team.

Funderburk said his team won the respect of the crowd by not giving up.

"The crowd could sense that we wanted to win this ballgame whether we had 20 players or six, and we went out there and did it."

"We certainly appreciated the folks who made the drive down to Charlotte from Winston. They helped to give us something to shoot for."

What really won the crowd over though, was a spectacular dunk from Don Hayes, who finished the game with 28 points.

Johnny Watkins got the ball on a missed shot and led a 2 on 1 fastbreak, but was covered by a Charlotte defender as he prepared to go up with the ball.

Watkins whipped a pass between his legs to Hayes, who threw down the one-handed dunk that ignited the crowd.

Funderburk said the play was a turning point.

"That brought us to within one point with about a third of the game left," he said.

"It got the crowd into the game with us too."

The Chronicle All-Stars then began to dictate the tempo of the game by pressing and trapping their opponent. The result was a 20-8 run and the rest was history.

Despite back to back timeouts, Charlotte never recovered from the Winston-Salem outburst.

Funderburk said his team was shaky early in the game, but came through in the clutch.

"We took a beating on the boards early in the game, but once we got our second wind in the second half, the tide began to turn our way," he said.

"Leon (Williams), (Don) Hayes, Terry Strickland (with 26 points) and Johnny Watkins (24 points), really did a good job scoring when we needed it. I think we left our mark on this league with our performance."

"I feel certain that we are one of the most exciting teams to watch in this league."

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## Local Sports

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chell said.

"From the Little League, we will have a team for the 11 and 12 year olds. They will have to travel to the Swaim Complex in Kernersville to play the Kernersville Little League Team on July 17.

"Our 13 year olds will have a team of their own and they play Randleman at Carver field on July 10," Mitchell said.

Mitchell said the 14 and 15 year old All-Star team will face Alamance County at Carver field on July 11. He said the selections for all three teams should be finalized by the first week in July.

### The Pony League

In the Twin City Pony League for 13-16 year olds, the race for the championship will come down to a sudden death playoff game.

The Astros, coached by Gene Williams and Rip Wilkins' Cardinals both finished at 8-4 in the four-team league. The Astros could've won the championship outright, but the Cardinals beat them 3-1 in the final game of the regular season to force the tie for first.

The Red Sox, coached by Rev. Zeb Payne lost to the Pirates 7-5 Sunday, and finished third in the league with a 7-5 record.

Coach Curtis Roseboro's Pirates finished at 6-6 with Sunday's win over the Red Sox.

### Growing Pains

Al Mitchell says both leagues are in dire need of their own complex.

"We really need our own place to call home," he said.



James Moore loses his batting helmet as he rounds third to score for the Yankees. The Yankees lost a 10-9 shootout to the Dodgers, and finished in a tie for third place in the Twin City Little League with a 9-5 record (photo by James Parker).

"This league has been around for quite a while, and we are anxious for it to start doing some positive growing. We hope a new little league complex is no more than three years away."

Mitchell said he also hopes to see the Pony league double in the next few years.

"Everyone asks me where all of the black players are in high school baseball, but the problem starts right here.

"We only have four teams for the 13-16 year olds, and a lot of them are afraid they can't make it in such a small league. They just quit playing after the Little

League because it's hard to get to play much when there's only four teams.

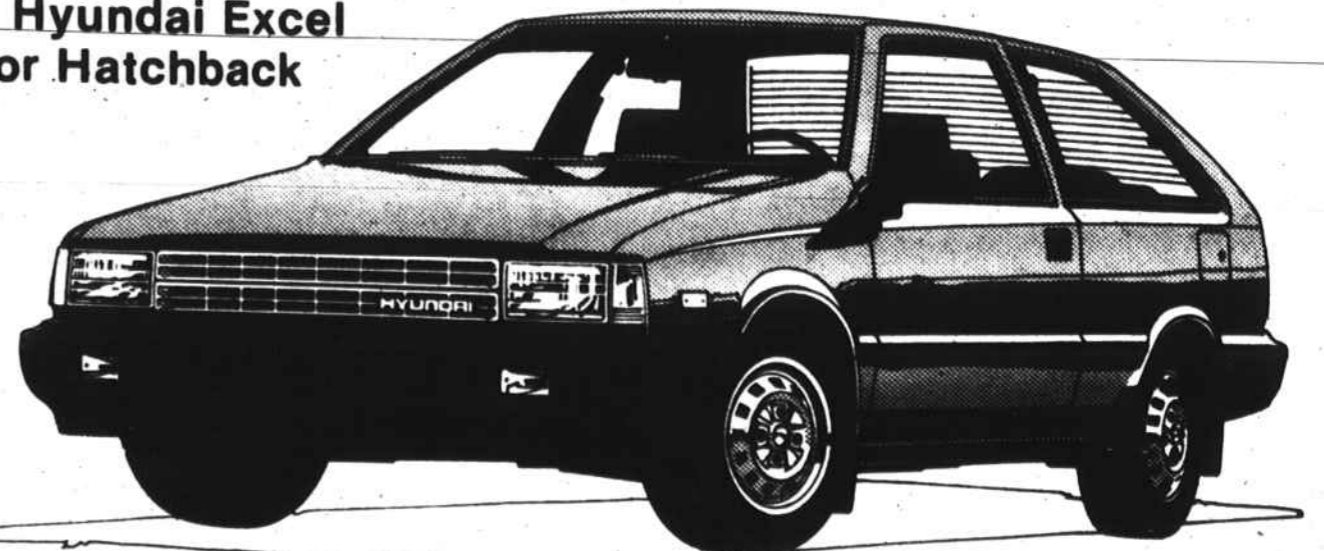
"We lose a lot of kids because of the Pony League being so small. The problem is the lack of coaches. We wanted to have six teams this year, but we couldn't find anyone to coach the new teams."

Anyone interested in coaching or volunteering their time to a little league or pony league team, should contact Al Mitchell at 722-3920.

"We welcome anyone who is willing to help us with these kids," he said.

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