

Sports

City's decision to ban pro fighters from 14th Street angers Lowery

By RANDY PETTITT
Chronicle Sports Editor

A few weeks ago, Whit Lowery was a man without a home. He had a roof over his head, but his real home -- the 14th Recreation Center Boxing Facility -- was closed to professional fighters. Lowery accepted the gracious offer of "Big Tom" Lawrence and has been training his fighters recently out of the Gladiators Boxing Club on Liberty Street, but he is still annoyed with the city's decision to bar pro fighters from the 14th Street facility.

"I'm the reason that place ever got built in the first place," said Lowery, who has recently been training former WBC Cruiserweight Champion of the World, Alfonso Ratliff.

Ratliff was scheduled to fight Francesco Damiani for the World Junior-weight title last Friday, but the fight was postponed. The two were training along with other pros and amateurs at 14th Street, before the city told Lowery that all pro fighters were banned from the facility.

Smith's Spencer debut was his first varsity start

Parkland rattles Panthers before bowing 53-45

By RANDY PETTITT
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Chris Smith probably could've picked a better time to make his first start on the varsity level, but he really had no choice.

Smith, a 6-2 junior guard for the Parkland Mustangs, had the unusual privilege of making his first varsity start in the Frank Spencer Classic.

Although they would have preferred to pick another time, the height-starved 1-6 Mustangs needed Smith's 6-2 frame to have any real chance of matching up inside with powerful Eden Morehead.

The junior transfer from Glenn responded to the call, matching courtmate John Young's team-high 13 points in his first taste of Frank Spencer action.

"I was a little nervous at first," Smith shyly admitted. "But once I got into the game, I tried to forget where I was at and just play basketball."

Smith played just one junior varsity game in his sophomore year at Glenn before electing to quit the team as a budding tenth grader.

"My mind just wasn't in the right place back then," said Smith of the decision. "Coach Swannell Cloud (Glenn's J.V. head coach) talked to me and helped straighten me up," he said.

"I've started hitting the books and practicing everyday. Today, it really payed off. This was a real boost getting to play in the Frank Spencer. I had a good time."

Although the Mustangs fell just short in their effort to upset the Northwest area's top team, 53-45, the emergence of Smith helped ease the blow.

Charles Schoderbek, who as acted as the Mustangs' interim coach while Tom Muse has been recuperating from a respiratory illness, says Smith has potential.

"You can tell he's played basketball before," said Schoderbek. "He really didn't play jayvees, but he has some talent."

"To call him a diamond in the rough might be a bit much -- I guess you could say he has to hone his skills a little."

"You hate to start a kid for the first time in the Frank Spencer Classic, but we needed his size. He had really been working hard since the break for the holidays and we felt it was time to let him play

"I don't think it's fair to come up with this all of a sudden," said Lowery, who has a long and successful history of developing such great amateur fighters as Harold Bennett and William Kennedy.

"We had been using the facility for quite a while and then all of a sudden they tell us we (pro fighters) have to get out. We really didn't have anywhere to go."

Nick Jamieson, the director of the Winston-Salem Recreation Department, said the facility was not intended for professional use.

"It (the 14th Street boxing facility) was built for amateur use," said Jamieson. "Our aim was to develop amateur talent, not professionals."

"Whit has done a heck of a job working with young people and has had some excellent amateur fighters."

Jamieson said city policy has always been for the facility to be used as an amateur facility. He indicated perhaps the policy had not been strictly enforced until recently, but nonetheless, it was still policy.

Lowery said it was not fair to let great amateur fighters who decided to turn pro, simply go out into the street.

"These are the same kids who won gold gloves and amateur tournaments," he said. "They have no where else to go. We are willing to put money back into the facility. In fact, I've spent a great deal of my own money on the place over the years."

"There is no reason why we shouldn't be allowed to use the facility. Half of the time it sits there empty. Why not let us use it."

"Besides, having the professional fighters around is really a good influence on the younger kids. Ratliff has spent a lot of his time working with some of the kids since he's been here."

"It's their chance to get some instructions from a former world champion. That has to be a good influence on the kids if nothing else is."

Jamieson said that the present policy was being reviewed and it was a possibility that something could be worked out.

"I've know Whit Lowery for a long time," said Jamieson. "Right now we're reviewing it and you can never rule out a change."

Bill Stuart, the city manager, said he has heard Lowery's complaint

Please see page B4

some.

"He turned out to be a nice surprise for us. He shot well and rebounded well for us inside."

Parkland was in dire need of inside help especially since the departure of 6-4 swingman Mike Hopkins, who quit the team a few weeks ago.

But despite the deficiency, the Mustangs outrebounded Eden Morehead 28-19 in the first round of the Frank Spencer Classic and nearly pulled off an upset.

Monte Odom, the Mustangs'

Spencer Classic Results

First Round

Glenn 84, Carver 66
N. Forsyth 72, N. Surry 65
Eden 53, Parkland 43
Mt. Tabor 50, Reynolds 75

Second Round

Eden 74, N. Forsyth 71
Glenn 66, Mt. Tabor 59

Consolation Round

Carver 44, Parkland 37
N. Surry 66, Reynolds 64

point guard, drew the unenviable assignment of guarding the explosive Donnie Seale.

Although Seale scored a game-high 24 points, Odom said his objective was pretty much carried out.

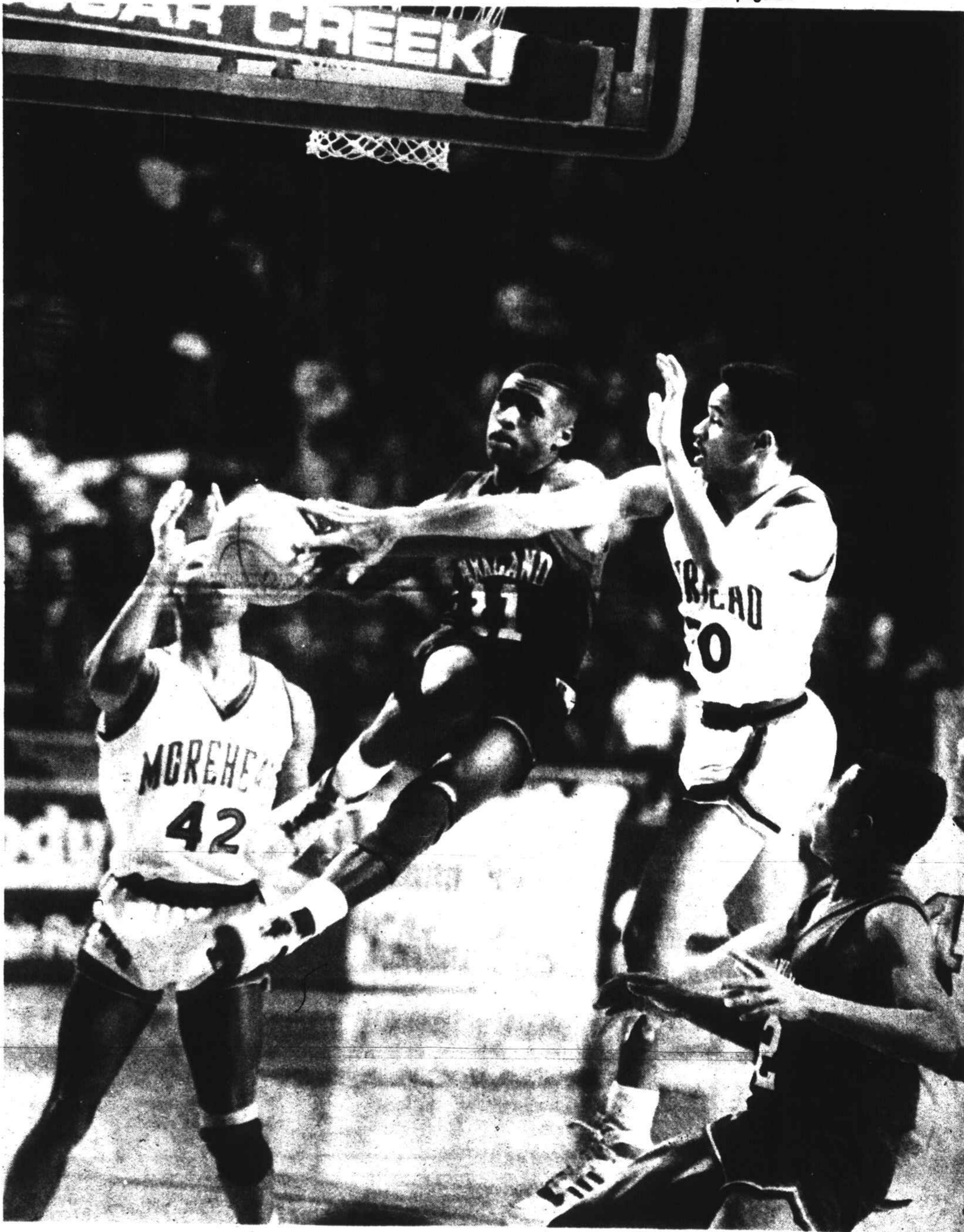
"I just wanted to keep him in the 20's," said Odom, who stands just 5-7, giving up seven inches to the taller Seale.

"He's a great player. I was trying to keep him from scoring 30 or 40 points and totally taking over the game. I had to watch it and lay off him a little bit to keep from getting posted up inside."

Odom scored just six points in the narrow loss, but was not concerned with his offense.

"I just wanted us to keep it close and have a chance to win the game," he said. "A lot of people thought we might get blown out by 30 or 40 points, so we had to really be patient. When you're seeded eighth, you have to go out and play

Please see page B3



Sunday Drive

Monte Odom (11) of Parkland drives down the lane past Donnie Seale (42) and Bruce Galloway (50) of Eden Morehead as John Young looks on. The Mustangs took the Panthers to the limit before bowing 53-45 in the first round of the Frank Spencer Holiday Classic. In other first round action, North Forsyth upset North Surry, Glenn topped Carver and Mount Tabor outlasted Reynolds (photo by Mike Cunningham).

ON THE SIDELINES

Muse makes triumphant return to coaching in Spencer Classic

By RANDY PETTITT
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If there was ever anyone who could make you feel guilty for missing a practice, then Tom Muse has to be the man.

Prior to this year, Muse -- the colorful head boys basketball coach at Parkland High School -- had been missed just two days on the job since 1960.

With his trademark during the colder months -- a plastic batting helmet -- Muse has long been a fixture on the football sidelines, acting as Homer Thompson's right-hand man during the grid iron season.

But a long, proud record of sorts was dealt an ugly blemish this fall when Muse was struck down with a

respiratory illness (viral pneumonia). He missed the Mustangs' last football game and all but an occasional glance of basketball practice.

Although his legacy is to be well carried out with a flock of sons, including Reynolds' assistant coach, Mike Muse and North's starting point guard, Tom Muse, Jr., the wily veteran was determined to create one of his famous fourth-quarter rallies. Much to his dislike, Muse sat out the Mustangs' first six basketball games and took a much needed rest. Assistant, Charlie Schoderbek, was pinned with the duty of interim coach while he recovered, and had assistant Steve Thornton working on the defensive schemes.

Carver picked the Mustangs' pocket for a season-opening win and things weren't looking so rosy for

Parkland as the season progressed. Prior to the Frank Spencer Holiday Classic, Parkland sported a 1-5 record and relied on a starting lineup that could be outsized by a lot of junior varsity teams.

Still, they persisted with the desire and stingy defenses that Muse has long been noted for.

Muse returned to the bench for Parkland's engagement with Spencer Classic favorite, Eden Morehead. And -- perhaps led by his steady influence -- Parkland took the Northwest area's top-ranked team to the limit before bowing, 53-48.

Many thought the game would be an ugly rout, but Parkland displayed patience and forced the run-and-gun Panthers to settle into a half-court offense.

"We knew they could run us out of the gym, but

Muse of Morehead.

"We knew that we had to be patient and look for one good shot every time down the floor. I thought we carried out our game plan very well."

Despite starting a team that had no one taller than 5-11, Parkland outrebounded Morehead's 6-7, 6-5, 6-4 and 6-3 starters, 28-19.

Although he was gracious in defeat, Muse was quick to point out the surprising Mustang supremacy on the boards.

"We were really boxing out well on the boards," Muse noted while standing outside his team's locker room at Memorial Coliseum.

Please see page B4