

ALUMNI

Sixers' Mahorn gives credit where it's due

Rick Mahorn, Philadelphia 76ers' power forward, has a message for some of the country's top high school players. Mahorn, a three-time, NAIA All-American, said there is nothing wrong with playing black college basketball.

"Today, I think most of the finest high school players want to play for colleges such as Michigan, UCLA and North Carolina," said Mahorn, a 6-10, 255-pounder who played his college ball at

Hampton Institute (now Hampton University). "They want to play on national television and in these big arenas. They also enjoy reading their names in the major newspapers. Quite naturally, this makes the bigger schools more attractive. But not everybody who attends these big universities receives all of the acclaim.

"That's why going to colleges like Hampton, Virginia State or Howard University isn't a bad idea. You may not

receive all the national recognition of a Notre Dame, but they will provide you with an opportunity to play a quality brand of basketball."

This season, Mahorn is averaging 10.9 points and 7 rebounds a night as one of the Sixers prime contributors. At Hampton, he was an All-CIAA performer and also led Division II in rebounding (15.8 a game) and was No. 5 in scoring (27.6 ppg) in his senior year ('79-'80). He

set 18 school records and played in four post-season all-star games, including the Aloha Classic, becoming only the third small college player to be invited to play (Jack Sikma, Illinois Wesleyan and Leonard "Truck" Robinson, Tennessee State, were the other two).

"I had a pretty good college career," Mahorn said. "I enjoyed playing for Hank Ford (former Hampton coach). We had a lot of great teams during those years. I remember getting the rebounds and throwing long passes to Darryl Warwick in the open court. I also enjoyed playing in the CIAA Tournament every year. You know, everybody talks about how the ACC used to get big crowds at their tournaments. But the CIAA Tournament sets attendance records every year. Plus, the tournament was a big event for all of the fraternities, sororities and alumni groups."

The tournament also attracts a number of NBA scouts. Mahorn's brilliant performance in the conference tourney caught the eye of the Washington Bullets, who selected Mahorn in the second round of the '80 NBA Draft.

"Like I said before, the black colleges don't receive a lot of publicity," Mahorn said. "But the pro scouts know where to come to find good players. There are always a lot of scouts at the CIAA Tournament. In my situation, I think being chosen in the second round was pretty good for a small college player. Right now, I think the CIAA is well represented in the NBA with myself, Charles Oakley and others (Terry Davis of Union now with the Magic; A.J. English of Union now with the Bullets; Ken Bannister of St. Augustine's now with the Clippers; and Ken Williams of Elizabeth City State now with the Pacers).

Mahorn, 32, is a 10-year veteran of the pro game. He played five seasons with the Bullets and in '85, was traded to the Pistons for Dan Roundfield. In his four seasons with Detroit, he teamed up with Bill Laimbeer to form the infamous "Bad Boys" image. Mahorn's rugged style was a key factor in the Pistons' winning the '89 NBA title.

But after Detroit won the championship, the Pistons' management left Mahorn unprotected in the league's expansion draft, where he was promptly chosen by the Minnesota Timberwolves. Then Philadelphia got Mahorn in a trade with the T-Wolves in exchange for one first-round pick and two second-round picks.

"I've played a long, long time in this league," said Mahorn, who earned his undergraduate degree in business administration. "I was very fortunate to win a championship. Now, I would certainly like to win another one. But if it wasn't for Hampton, I wouldn't be where I am today. I have to give them a lot of credit. They have me an opportunity to play basketball and receive a good education. I don't think anyone could ask for more."

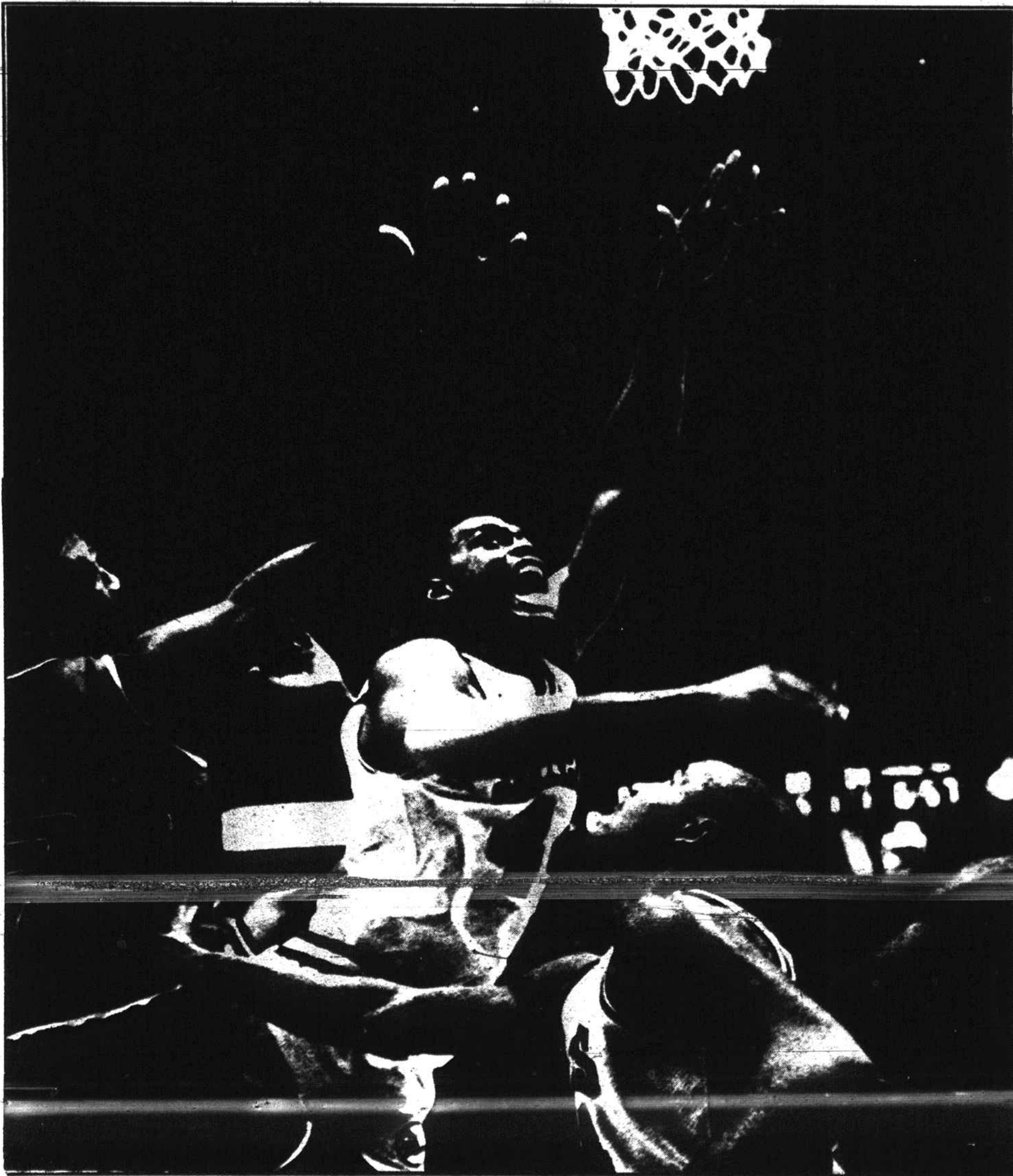


Photo by Mike Maicher

Mahorn's physical style has served him well during his ten years in the NBA.

-Donald Hunt