

Remembering Bobby D.

▲ Dandridge now does magic on Hampton bench

By MICHAEL JOHNSON
Chronicle Sports Writer

During the CIAA Tournament, there was a legend among the sidelines. A former player during the late 1960s, he was an all-conference performer who went on to stardom in the NBA.

Now the assistant coach of the men's basketball team at Hampton University, Bobby Dandridge, known to close friends as "Bobby D.," reflects on his new role in the CIAA.

"It's a little different watching from the sidelines, but I've been doing it for six years, so I'm used to it," said Dandridge, who joined the Hampton staff in 1987. "It's a different perspective, but I get a chance to enjoy the game a different way."

Dandridge's star-studded career at Norfolk State started in 1966 after a prolific high-school career in his hometown. As a junior and senior, he was named all-CIAA and was the conference tournament most valuable player in 1969. Dandridge's baseline jumper was his calling card and was as feared as revered.

"We had some great players during those days, including Richard Kirkland and James Grant before me," he said. "Playing in front of crowds that cheered on the team and some that didn't was what it was all about."

As a fourth-round pick of the Milwaukee Bucks in 1970, Dandridge joined a team that included National Basketball Association Hall-of-Famers Kareem Abdul-Jab-



Bobby Dandridge

bar (then known as Lew Alcindor) and Oscar Robertson.

For the rookie, it was the chance of a lifetime.

"It's not everyday that you get to play with two of the greatest players ever to play," he said. "I learned a lot from those two players. From Oscar, I learned how to play hard; how to be a professional. From Kareem, he taught me the importance of utilizing the utmost of your abilities. Those were lessons I carried on throughout my professional career."

With Dandridge starting at small forward, the Bucks' lineup was solidified. As a rookie, he helped the Bucks go on to defeat the Los Angeles Lakers in the NBA finals to become the fastest expansion team in NBA history to win a championship.

Dandridge went on to play for eight seasons with the Bucks, before

being traded to the Washington Bullets in 1978. There, he played with another pair of Hall-of-Famers — Elvin Hayes and Wes Unseld. And lightning struck twice again — the Bullets won an NBA title by beating the Seattle SuperSonics. Dandridge said winning the title the second time around was a little bit sweeter.

"Winning the title as a rookie made me take for granted the hard work it would take to get back there," he said. "A lot of players don't even get a chance to play for one, and here I was, a champion my first year in the league. During the next seven, eight years it was hard to reach that level."

Dandridge played for three more seasons before retiring in 1981. After spending several years in business, Dandridge got the basketball bug and came under Hampton head coach Malcolm Avery's wing.

"I saw it as an opportunity to get back into the game, something I enjoy doing," he said. "Watching these kids develop into better players is something to see."

In this year's CIAA Tournament, the Pirates advanced into the semifinals, losing to eventual tournament champion Virginia Union. Dandridge said he is looking forward to next year, with his team returning four starters.

"I like our team next year, but losing (Pirate forward David) Saunders will hurt us next year," he said. "But with a few good recruits, and everybody else coming back, I'll think we'll be all right."

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Peebles

but this team has some great chemistry," he said.

Another difference is in Peebles himself. As a sophomore, he said that he was not as assertive in his game. Now, he said all systems are go.

The coach said I would have the green light this year, and I've been able to take that upon myself," he said.

Virginia Union coach, Dave Robbins agrees.

Warren is a different player than he was two years ago. Now, he is even more confident in his game, if that is possible," he said.

An example of Peebles' growth was evident in the tournament. Against Virginia State, Peebles scored only two points at intermission. The second half brought out a different Peebles as he scored 23 points as the Panthers took an 85-76 win.

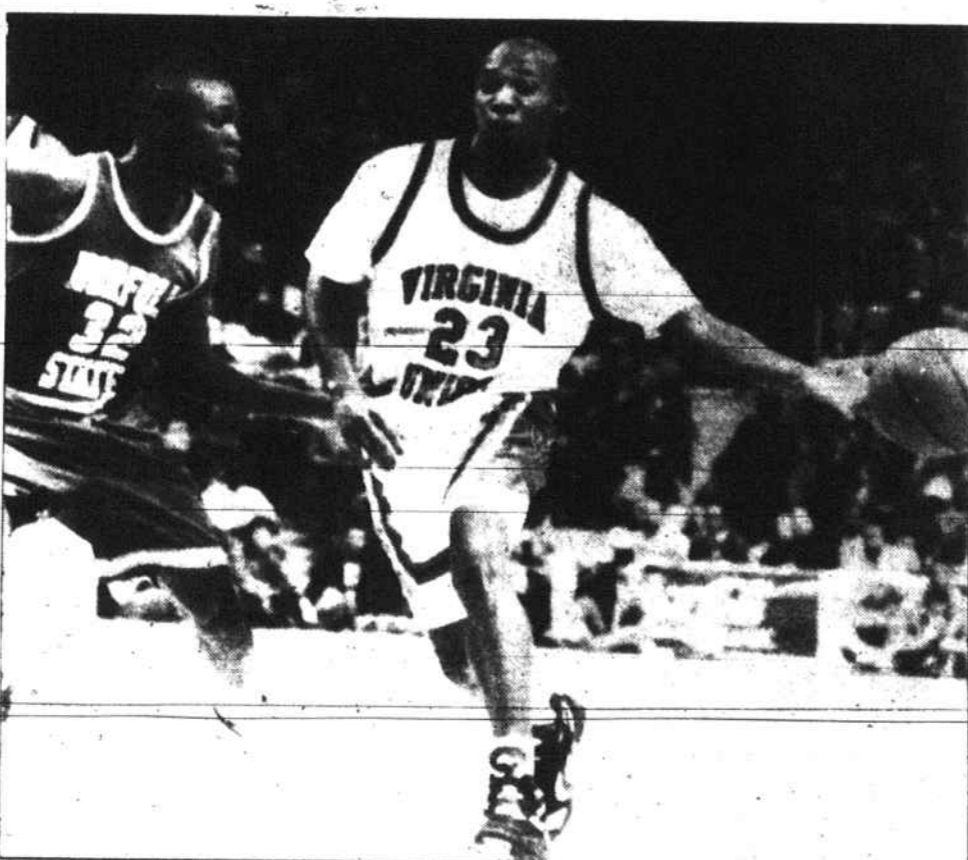
Warren attacked them in the second half, and that was the difference," said Reggie Jones, one of eight seniors on Union's squad. "He fires the team up with his play, and that's how we're able to hang in games."

Peebles proved his mettle in the semifinals, and the championship game. Against Fayetteville State, Peebles scored 24 points as the Panthers struggled to a 83-78 win. And in the championship game, he halted a Norfolk rally midway in the second half with a pair three-point baskets.

Peebles was the key, and we knew that coming into the game we had to stop him," Norfolk State coach Mike Bernard said. "But stopping him hasn't been something most teams have done this year."

During his career, Peebles has experienced few low points: Union 109-13 in his four years. But Peebles said the team has had no breaks during that time.

Every year, we've had to go out and play a little bit harder because everybody's gunning for us," he said. "But we've met all challenges and we've come out on top most of the time."



Virginia Union's Warren Peebles was a unanimous choice on the 13-member All-CIAA team.

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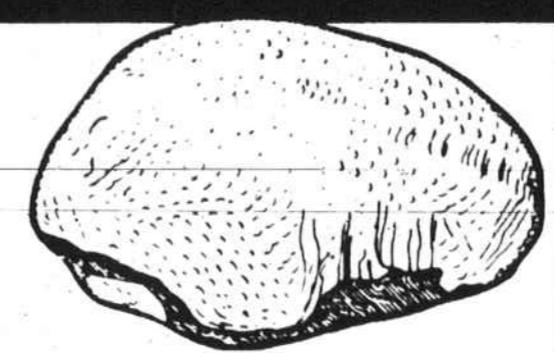
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