

From The Press Box

Sam Davis

No need to keep quiet in search for coaches

Each time the issue of minority coaches has come to the forefront in Forsyth County, a lot of decision-makers have grown awfully quiet.

Last season, nearly all of the athletic directors in the county acknowledged the fact that Forsyth County's coaching ranks don't reflect the student-athletes who play at their respective schools. However, what they didn't do was come to a consensus on what can be done to alleviate that problem.

No one seems to have a clear-cut answer for dealing with the present state. Yet, the fact remains that it is a problem that won't go away and it must be addressed. The sooner people around here get around to it, the better the situation will become. In the meantime the young people who play the games on the field are suffering. Many are not achieving or tapping their vast potential because of a lack of mentors and role models to which African American students can relate.

Currently, there are two vacancies among the county's eight football programs. One only needs to go up and down the rosters of the programs in question to realize that the majority of the players in both pro-

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grams are African American.

Those aren't the only two programs in the county with that particular situation, neither are they the only ones that need to be addressed at this particular juncture. But they are the ones who will be making major decisions in the coming weeks regarding the makeup of their staffs.

For more than two-and-a-half decades the African American population in Forsyth County has had to bear an undue burden as far as integration is concerned. That burden spilled over into the athletic corridor when all four of the high schools in the African American community were closed and the members of those respective athletic staffs were dispersed to parts unknown.

No one raised a red flag when that was done. For African Americans seeking an opportunity for their children to receive an equal education with their counterparts it seemed like a good trade-off. Looking back upon that situation now, however, a lot of people question that mode of thinking.

What's been done in the past is water under the bridge, as the "ole folks" say. No one or two isolated acts today can make up for that grave injustice. However, another old adage should be applied. That is "if you don't learn from the past the same things will haunt you in the future." Forsyth County's athletics directors and principals need to take that to heart.

There are a lot of programs that have suffered over the years because of the decisions that have been made. Let's not add to them.

African American assistants deserve head coaching chance

By HERBERT L. WHITE
CONSOLIDATED MEDIA GROUP

Recycling is good for the environment, but not necessarily for coaches.

When Carolina Panthers owner Jerry Richardson went looking for a new head coach it didn't seem to matter to him that all of the people he had in mind had been through the wringer several times.

Although he ended up hiring George Seifert, there were several others atop the list that had been processed more than once.

While Mike Holmgren, Seifert and Steve Spurrier headed the list, there were a couple of

qualified African Americans who didn't make the first cut, namely Art Shell, Willie Shaw, and Sherm Lewis.

They are among the top assistant coaches in the league, and have the credentials to lead teams. Shell was the first African American head coach in the modern NFL, but was turned out by the mercurial Al Davis despite a winning record in Oakland. Sherm Lewis is Green Bay's offensive coordinator and is one of the top minds in the sport. Shaw built Oakland's defense into something resembling its old Silver-and-Black reputation without a lot of big-name play-



Lewis

ers. Will they get a chance to head a program? Something tells me no, an answer way too many black coaches hear. Not enough experience, some prospective bosses say of Lewis, who doesn't call Green Bay's plays. Or too much excess baggage in the case

See Lewis, on B3

Reynolds gets revenge, wins Spencer over Parkland

By SAM DAVIS
THE CHRONICLE

Reynolds extracted a measure of revenge against Parkland and captured the championship of the Frank Spencer Tournament with an 83-72 victory last Wednesday night.

The Demons' victory made up for a three-point loss they suffered in their second game of the season, 86-83 on their home court.

That loss has served as a source of motivation for RJR. The Demons had been in the finals of the tournament in two of the last three seasons and came away empty each time.

This time, the Demons wanted to make the most of their opportunity. Their loss to Parkland helped fire up the Demons and get them out to a fast start, according to Travis Holcomb-Faye, who was named the tournament's Most Valuable Player.

"We had something to prove," Holcomb-Faye said. "We were the underdogs and people didn't expect us to win. We wanted to prove something to them."

RJR made that clear from the outset.

The Demons jumped to a good start and never trailed after the opening minute of the game. Reynolds stretched

its lead to 12 points in the first quarter and 13 points in the second quarter before Parkland came galloping back. Clifford Crawford, the team's leader, showed why he is rated as the top guard prospect in the state of North Carolina when he led a comeback in both the second and third quarters. But each time Reynolds had an answer. The most important came after Parkland cut the margin to three, 54-51, at the end of the third quarter.

Brad Tuttle canned back-to-back 3-pointers to start the fourth quarter and Parkland wasn't able to get any closer. Coach Howard West of

Reynolds said his team's experience and depth made the difference in the game.

"Most of our players have been on the varsity for three years and they felt like they had something to prove," said West, who captured his first Frank Spencer title and Reynolds' first since the inaugural one in 1974. "I'm really elated for the seniors. If ever a team deserved to win it, it is this one. They deserved it because they've been through so much. They've been in the finals twice and this time they came out on top."

West rotated his lineup

See Reynolds, on B3



Holcomb-Faye

Photo by Bruce Chapman

Photo by Bruce Chapman
Travis Holcomb-Faye goes to the basket in the championship game of the Frank Spencer Classic.



Holcomb-Faye remained focused despite subplots at Frank Spencer tourney

By SAM DAVIS
THE CHRONICLE

Even before the 1998 Frank Spencer Holiday Classic tipped off, there were several subplots going on inside the Reynolds High program.

The first was the fact that Coach Howard West was in pursuit of his first tournament championship.

That, however, wasn't the most compelling. The one that jumps right out at you is the fact that a participant in the tournament had a chance to join his father and be a part of the first father-son duo to win the tournament's Most Valuable Player Award.

But still, a major hurdle stood in the way. For three nights Travis Holcomb-Faye found a way to etch his name in the history of the storied tournament. In the final game, 83-72 victory over Parkland, he got over a nemesis that had dogged him for nearly a year.

Holcomb-Faye's last three personal duals with Parkland point guard Clifford Crawford had all ended up in losing efforts. They included two losses during AAU play last spring and an 86-83 loss to Parkland three weeks ago.

But Holcomb-Faye said he didn't look at it as a personal grudge match when the two squared off in the Frank Spencer Classic.

"It was much more important than that," Holcomb-Faye said. "Coach West told me before the game that I couldn't turn this into a personal matchup. I just had to play my best game and do what I do to help the team."

That strategy proved to be the panacea that Holcomb-Faye and the Demons needed to solve the Mustangs, who brought an undefeated record into the game.

Reynolds got the most out of its deep bench in the game and Holcomb-Faye did his damage in flurries as RJR jumped out to their early margin and beat back several Mustang challenges.

Holcomb-Faye, for his part, proved that discretion is the better part of valor. He didn't take unnecessary shots and distributed the ball to open teammates to help his team to the win. That was enough to earn him the MVP award.

"They got us the first time and we didn't want that to happen again," Holcomb-Faye said. "They were talking a lot of junk after they beat us and we felt like we had something to prove."

However, it was a collective idea and not an individual one for Holcomb-Faye and his

See Holcomb-Faye, on B2

Dudley's Neal decides to attend East Carolina

By DAMON FORD
THE CHRONICLE

East Carolina's recruiting season received a shot in the arm recently when it received an oral commitment from Virgil Neal, an offensive and defensive lineman from Greensboro's Dudley High School.

Neal will be able to sign a binding letter of intent when the football signing period begins on Feb. 4.

Although oral commitments are non-binding, Neal says it's definitely a done deal.

"I felt like it was the place for me," Neal said. "Their program is on the rise. I want to help build this program."

Michael Ferguson, Dudley's head football coach, was a graduate assistant coach at ECU from 1984-1985. He says his star



Virgil Neal

pupil made a good decision.

"Greenville is a hidden treasure," Ferguson said. "They do a good job with the student athletes. They've got excellent programs."

"I like the coaching staff they

have (too). It's a growing program."

Neal chose the Pirates over ACC programs such as UNC, N.C. State and Clemson. According to Ferguson, several other colleges like Bowling Green and Miami of Ohio came calling for Neal's services.

But ECU was one of the first schools to recruit him and offer a scholarship to Neal, which went a long way in his decision.

"It's a big stress reliever to know that I have a place to go," he said.

The Pirates lost their whole defensive line this past season and though Neal will be redshirted in 1999 to tack on 20 pounds to his 6-4, 270 pound frame, he sees a great opportunity for playing time in the 2000 season.

See Neal, on B2