

Former 'Black Golf Tour' pro Jim Conrad stresses unity



Ralph Gaillard
Golf-N-Around

Like countless other African-American youngsters growing up in the South, Jim Conrad was not allowed to play at golf courses because of his color. In his youth, he caddied at Mount Airy Country Club and taught himself how to play golf at a makeshift golf course in a country field. When Winston Lake Golf Course opened in the 1950s, he played there and honed his golf game.

Conrad moved to Pennsylvania and then to New York. Dur-

ing his amateur career, he won eight tournaments. He turned pro after winning the Harlem, N.Y., YMCA Golf Tournament in 1970 and being presented with the winning trophy named for baseball legend Jackie Robinson.

Conrad played on the "Black Golf Tour" and competed in many pro tournaments across the country. During that time, he also began writing for On the Ball Magazine, an African-American golf publication. He eventually became the magazine's executive editor.

Conrad recently reflected, "I might have spent too much time involved with the magazine, when I should have been spending more time on my golf game."

Although he didn't post a

win on the "Black Tour," he did have many top-10 finishes in those highly competitive tournaments.

Conrad has had four holes-in-one in his career. One of his most notable holes-in-one was during a practice round before a tournament in Florida. He was playing that round with African-American golf legends Charlie Sifford, Charlie Owens and Pete Brown.

Conrad provided this writer a little known black-history fact. During the 1970s, 14 African Americans were playing regularly on the PGA Tour: Nate Starke, Ron Terry, George Johnson, Lee Carter, Curtis Sifford, Charlie Sifford, Jim Thorpe, Lee Elder, Calvin Peete, Jim Dent, Pete

Brown, Charlie Owens, James Black and Junior Walker.

In 2002, Tiger Woods is the only African American playing regularly on the PGA Tour. Jim Dent, Jim Thorpe and Walter Morgan are the only African Americans playing regularly on the Senior PGA Tour. Calvin Peete, Lee Elder and Charlie Sifford play sparsely on the senior circuit these days.

Conrad, the self-proclaimed "Hair Care Guru," owns and operates Conrad's Hair Design on New Walkertown Road in Winston-Salem and has a weakness for the youths of our community. For many years, he went into his pocket and paid for Christmas gifts for kids in public housing. He has been an instruc-

tor in the "free" Vic Johnson Junior Golf Clinic at Reynolds Park Golf Course since its inception. He said, "Public and municipal golf courses should provide free instruction and play for youngsters. After all, kids are the future of golf, and one day will become paying customers."

Likewise, he continued, "the golf equipment companies should provide free equipment for youngsters who participate in free junior golf clinics. College golf programs receive free equipment from the manufacturers, and they should also donate free equipment to junior programs."

Conrad said he is proud to be a part of Johnson's clinic. "Vic Johnson is doing a wonderful

job, and more people in our community need to start free junior golf programs."

Conrad said, "Golf has taught me that without unity there is no progress. We must all learn to put our differences aside and work together for the betterment of our children and our community."

Conrad may not always tell you what you want to hear, but he will tell you like it is.

In other local happenings, the Winston Lake Senior Golf Association will hold its regular monthly meeting on Thursday, March 21, at 6:30 p.m. at the E. Jerry Jones Clubhouse at The Lake.

Until next time, keep it in the fairway.

Reynolds

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their berth in the state title game after taking a thrilling victory over West Forsyth last Saturday night in the Western 4-A Regional final.

"It was an awesome performance," said West, whose team dropped one of two regular season conference games and the championship game of the Central Piedmont 4-A Conference tournament to the Titans. "It was a tough game and there was a lot of pressure for what was at stake. It was really a big win."

The Demons had to overcome some last-second hysteria to win the game. RJR was hit with a technical with 15 seconds remaining and West Forsyth also drilled a 3-pointer in the closing

seconds. However, Reynolds was able to hold on for the victory to improve its overall record to 25-6 going into Saturday's battle.

Fayetteville 71st, which Reynolds defeated to capture the first of its back-to-back titles two years ago, is a formidable opponent.

"Fayetteville 71st is a good team," West said. "They have size and they have talent. The thing that concerns me is they have a lot of offensive players who can hurt you."

Juan Wheat (6-6) and Billy Houston (6-7) lead 71st, which brings a 28-2 record into Saturday's game. Wheat has committed to play for Yale in the Ivy League next season and Billy Houston has signed to attend Winthrop. Point guard Casey Long is also a strong player.

The Demons benefited from the return of Whit Holcomb-Faye in their run at the regionals. Holcomb-Faye, who returned after a severe ankle injury kept him out of play for more than three weeks, was named the regional's MVP after scoring 25 points in the title game.

"Whit really gave us a lift," West said. "He gave us a lot of leadership and with him it allowed us to get our rotation back in place."

Another key for the Demons was the overall play of Reyshawn Terry, a 6-7 junior forward who transferred from Glenn midway through the season.

"Reyshawn is a very competitive player who wants to achieve things and puts in the time to get it done," West said. He's still finding his way in what

we do, but the good thing is he's very coachable and if he makes a mistake he hustles to make it up."

With Terry working in the frontcourt, it has allowed 6-9 forward/center Keith Foster more freedom. It has also opened up opportunities for Andre Reid to become more involved.

West said he'll need all of his players on top of their games to come away from Saturday's game with another state title.

"Not a whole lot of people gave us a chance to get back here, so we're pretty happy to be here," West said. "We're playing a good 71st team. They rebound well and we've got to attack the glass offensively and do things to get into the paint and cause them foul trouble. We've got to get into a transition game - just play the game that's got us here."

Parkland

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a 40-point, 12-rebound effort by Eric Hicks.

In the process, Parkland overcame an 11-point deficit going into the final quarter and some last-second heroics by Hicks. Javon Scipio's 3-pointer at the buzzer lifted the Mustangs to their victory and set off a wild celebration on the coliseum's floor.

"I have to give credit to our kids because they believed they could come back even though we were down by 11 points going into the fourth quarter," said Parkland coach Mike Pennington. "We started chipping away, chipping away, and the next thing I knew we were down by only 1 with a minute to play."

The frantic final minute of play seemed like an eternity for the players. Phillip McCandies of Parkland was fouled and made two free throws with just under a minute to play. Hicks hit one of two free throws for Dudley to even the score. Marcus Jordan was fouled with 30 seconds remaining and hit both free throws for Parkland. Michael Hayes scored on a jumper to close Dudley's deficit. Ray Bristow was fouled on the ensuing possession and drilled both shots to put Parkland up by 3 points with 18 seconds left.

Hayes came down and rushed a shot for Dudley but missed. However, Hicks rebounded the shot and dribbled out beyond the 3-point arc and drilled a jumper to even the score with eight seconds on the clock.

Dudley celebrated momentarily and Parkland pushed the ball quickly back down court where Javon Scipio uncorked a 3-pointer just before the buzzer that found the range and lifted the Mustangs to victory.

"Ray really pushed the ball up court and they forced him to give it up about the hash mark," Pennington said. "He gave it to Javon Scipio and he stepped into the shot and we're going to Chapel Hill."

Pennington said his team's performance was gutsy, and many college recruiters present for the game called the game the best one they had ever seen on the high school level.

"Hicks was phenomenal - scoring points, rebounding, blocking shots and altering others," Pennington said. "But our kids kept taking it to him and didn't back down."

"When Hicks hit that shot, I was thinking, 'Here we go again,' because that's how we lost to them at our place during the season," Pennington added. "But our kids showed a lot of courage, especially with so much at stake. It was a heck of a game, and you have to feel for Dudley. They

were the team to beat."

The Mustangs are trying to put the victory behind them and prepare for West Rowan in the championship game on Saturday at 9 p.m.

"One of our goals has been to get to Chapel Hill," Pennington said. "But it's not our ultimate goal. We have a chance to achieve it. Our kids have not gotten the respect they deserve, but they've done the things they needed to do to get us here. In the East (Region), everyone talked about Kinston, Southern Durham and Dudley. We beat all three in one week."

Parkland's matchup against West Rowan is a rematch of the 1999 state 3-A championship game, in which the Mustangs captured the state championship and set a record for scoring.

The Mustangs are a decided

underdog, but that's the way it's been in each of the Mustangs' previous four games on the road to Chapel Hill. West Rowan brings a 29-0 record into the game and is ranked No. 1 in the state in 3-A basketball. Its closest game came in the West Regional last weekend when it took a 10-point victory. Before that game, West Rowan's slimmest margin of victory was 13.

"They've been crushing people all season," Pennington said.

The big gun for West Rowan is Danté Minter. Minter, a 6-9 center, started as a freshman on the 1999 team that lost to Parkland in the championship game. Minter, who averages 23 points per game, has signed to play at Appalachian State next season. Junior Hairston, a 6-6 wing player, also is going to cause Parkland matchup problems.

J.C. Smith

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ble digits behind the scoring of Dustin Edwards, who scored 13 second-half points and 17 in the game, but Smith closed the gap to 59-52 with 5:00 remaining. The Golden Bulls cut the lead on several occasions, but the Eagles got it back up each time before the crucial call against Sims with 52 seconds to play.

Joyner said his team was

disappointed with the loss but its 23-8 record was much better than most people expected after Smith lost four starters from last year's team, which captured the South Atlantic Regional and advanced to the Elite Eight for the first time in school history.

"There's a lot we can feel proud about," he said. "I was hoping these seniors could defend that title, but we came up short."



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