



Photos by Anthony Hill
Hot Boyz star guard Danny Gathings prepares to take off while his teammates look on.

Ballers battle for citywide bragging rights

Late night hoopers finishing great season

BY ANTHONY HILL
 THE CHRONICLE

Well, the regular season is over at 14th Street and Martin Luther King Recreational Centers. The hoopers in both leagues finished the playoffs and championship game last night. But, they say that the most exciting games are the ones that lead up to the championship game.

And, it's hard to beat the performance the guys at both centers put on this week, especially at 14th Street. The final four had Somethin' New against a hungry Strictly Da Realist squad. The final game of the night was between City View and Hot Boyz on Monday. Both of those games were as good as advertised.



Minor

"We were just tryin' to show everyone that we were better than them," said SDR guard Julius Minor. "We were pretty upset after we read that

story in the paper last week. Josh (Pittman) was doing all that talking. We wanted to see if he could back it up."

SDR's star forward John Adams added: "Yeah, we didn't have to take it to Carl Russell. We found out who was the best tonight. I'm the leading scorer, not Josh. I'm the best player. Not him. And, we're the best team. We proved that tonight."

Strictly Da Realist did more than prove they were a better team. They proved they could win a big game while being the underdog. No one really gave them a shot against one of the city's best teams, Somethin' New.

"We knew we could win this," Adams said. "They

weren't ready for us. They weren't ready for me. I felt like I just had my way with these boys tonight. This is the way we roll, baby. And, we're going to keep on rolling."

Strictly Da Realist rolled to a 52-50 victory on Monday. Adams led the team in scoring with 23 points. He poured in 13 points in the first half alone. Minor also had a good game for SDR. Somethin' New was led by Jamil Pope. He finished with 19 points in a losing effort.

The Hot Boyz stole one from City View to advance to the championship game. Sure, they had their normal, awesome play from Danny Gathings and Travis Holcomb-

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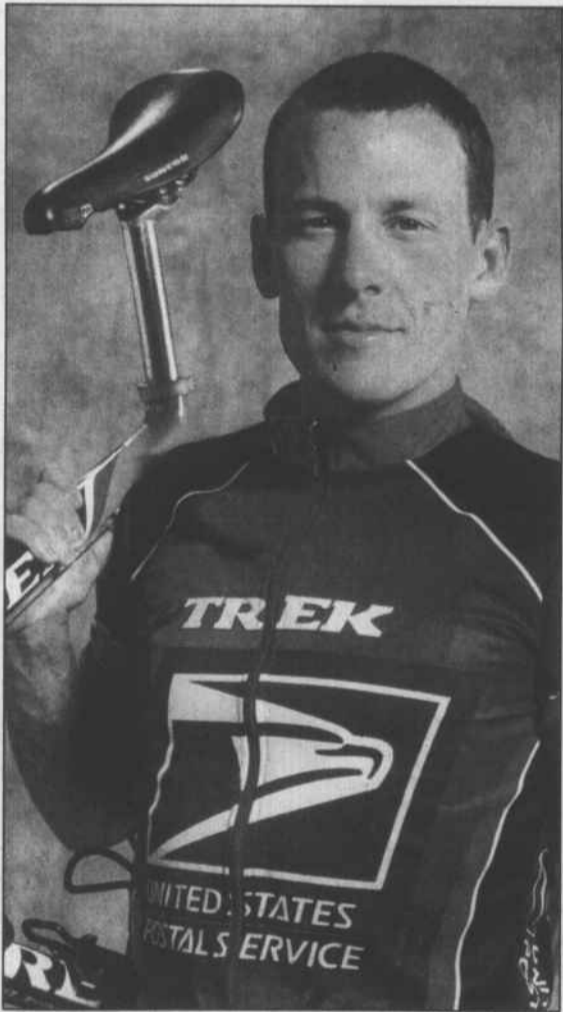
Hill

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straight Tour de France victory. I began to think to myself, "Hey, we (blacks) could take over that sport next."

Why not? For the most part, we've taken over baseball, basketball, football and track and field. And recently, we've taken over men's golf and women's tennis. We're also making strides in hockey. Hockey might take a while to take over, though. But, what about biking? Why couldn't blacks begin to excel in that sport? I mean, it's not like 90 percent of us didn't spend countless hours, pedaling hundreds of miles each week when we were younger. I remember me and about three or four of my boys, riding bikes all day long. I don't remember ever complaining about the distance or speed at which we were traveling. But, I do remember all the fun we had and all the time we spent training for a sport (biking) that we somehow forgot about after we were old enough to drive. Why didn't we take biking serious? Why didn't we ever boast to other neighborhood kids by saying, "I'm going to be the first black cyclist to win the Tour de France." Instead, we had dreams and hopes of being football stars or basketball and baseball standouts. Some of us even chose wrestling and other sports to shine. Most of us never even thought about being a professional cyclist.

If you stopped and thought about the difficulty of most of the sports and other extra curric-



Five-time Tour de France winner Lance Armstrong.

ular activities we chose to partake in, and then, thought about how much easier pedaling a bike was — most of us would've thought we wasted a lot of years. Don't get me wrong, Lance Armstrong and even the other cyclist are great athletes, who accomplish so much every time they hit the road are marvelous athletes. But, biking isn't the most challenging sport in the world. You basically have to have a lot of lungs, heart, desire and equipment to be a successful rider. Oh yeah, and we have to deal with the fact that no one cares about how good we are until the Tour de France comes around. And, that alone, might be enough for most black, ego-driven athletes to stay away from the bikes without motors. You know, we like to shine. And, we like for everyone to know how good we are at our sports. After all, what good is being a great athlete if you don't have any fans? Maybe cycling won't be the next sport we take over. I don't know. I know it won't be swimming or diving that we chose to try our luck in. Most of us are either scared of heights or simply, can't swim. We might be able to do something with NASCAR or gymnastics. Well, if we can't take over another sport or make a significant difference: I hope we can keep, or at least maintain control of the sports we do have an advantage playing.

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CIAA

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very dominating Ram defensive front into the 2003 campaign. He is joined on the defensive team by another Ram All-Rookie selection in 2002, punter Chad Oakley. Oakley pinned opponents inside their own 20-yard line eleven times last season and averaged over 35 yards per punt with a long of 61 yards. He will prove invaluable again this season.

The Rams are selected to finish in the second slot in the Western Division this season, behind only Fayetteville State who was able to squeak out a four-overtime win versus the Rams last season. This season may prove to be a very different story for the Rams as they have netted one of the best recruiting classes in the CIAA and have once again bolstered their coaching staff as they prepare for another date with the CIAA Football Championship game.

"Hopefully, with the addition of what we think is a strong recruiting class, and the

addition of two new staff members, coupled with the experience that our young players got last season, we will be much improved over last year's disappointing 4-6 finish," Blount concluded. "However, we are well aware of the parity in the CIAA conference and we can only hope to perform to the best of our abilities, catch a few breaks, and remain successful."

The Rams will open up the 2003 season versus national

powerhouse Carson-Newman College on August 30, at Bowman-Gray Stadium at 6:00 pm. Tickets are available by calling the University Ticket Office at (336) 750-3220.

Making the All-CIAA Pre-Season team on offense are the following Rams:

OL - Marcus McNair - Senior - 6'3" - 285 lbs. - Plymouth, NC

RC - Brandon Free - Junior - 6'1" - 180 lbs. - Greensboro,

NC
 PK - Aston Oakley - Senior - 5'10" - 170 lbs - Haw River, NC

Making the Pre-Season All-Conference Team on defense for the Rams are the following:

DL - Rodney Norman - Senior - 6'2" - 285 lbs. - Plymouth, NC

P - Chad Oakley - Sophomore - 6'1" - 215 lbs. - Haw River, NC

Tiny Vikings host football and cheerleading sign-ups

CHRONICLE STAFF REPORT

The W-S Tiny Vikings are having football and cheerleading sign-ups tomorrow (Aug. 1). The team will host two other registration dates as well: Aug. 4 and Aug. 8. Registration will take place from 6 to 8 p.m. at Mineral Springs Middle School on those dates.

Children who want to play need to have a certified birth certificate, current physical (dated no later than April, 2003) and a final report card

from last year. The fee is \$125 per child (Cash or money order). The team will also have a light practice for the kids who have registered and been cleared to play. Participants must have a current physical in order to start practice. A doctor will be on site during the sign-up days if your child does not have a current physical. The fee is \$10. For more info please contact Helene Evans at 705-5921.

Panthers

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mer New Orleans Saint had no problem asking his competitors for advice on the first day of camp.

"I talked to pretty much every one of them," said Delhomme. "Whichever one is around me at the time, I'll ask them a question about a certain play if I need to know."

While that may seem to be a bad idea, taking advice from someone who wants to beat you out of a job, it's all part of life in the NFL. Every move and every play is recorded, analyzed and used against you in the court of public opinion.

Speaking of which, a recent poll on Panthers.com asked the fans who they thought would be the starter on opening day versus Jacksonville. The pecking order, according to the poll, was Peete, Delhomme, Weinke, Fasani.

"Sometimes I like to be the underdog," said Weinke. "People are going to talk about this quarterback battle, and that's just the way it is. This League is set up so that the quarterback is talked about the most. With this competition at hand, I'm

going to continue to go about my business."

While the other guys are trying to take your job, the important thing to realize is that you can only control your own performance. Peete has been through this sort of thing many times before, beginning with his rookie season in Detroit.

"It's always good to have competition," he said. "It pushes you to work harder and to get better. It's going to be good for all of us. Not only good for individuals but for the team. If one person goes down, you have guys behind him who worked hard to earn the job."

"You're always competing. You have to go out there and compete even if you've been a starter and have been to 10 or 12 Pro Bowls. You're always going to have to go out and compete against that next guy coming in. That never changes."



Weinke

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