

SPORTS WEEK

SECTION B

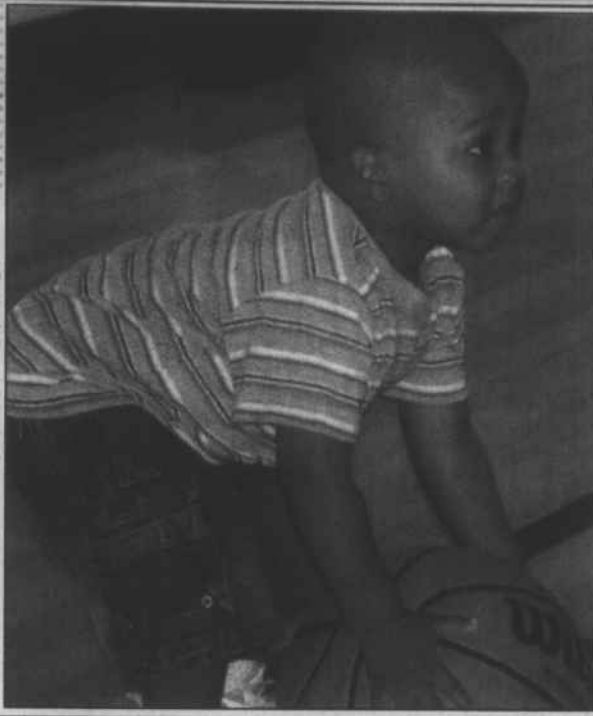
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JUNE 24, 2004

WHO'S OPEN?

Photo by Kevin Walker

Twenty-month-old Austin Phillips played with the big boys last week at the Winston Lake Family YMCA. Little Austin could not quite make the slam dunks like the older ballers but he managed to grab hold of a rebound every now and then.



'IT'S ON AGAIN'

Ballers ready for Late Nite hoops

BY ANTHONY HILL
THE CHRONICLE

The Late Nite basketball season at 14th Street Recreation Center has begun another season. Many of the teams looked to have increased their talent level from a year ago, when the team known as Strictly Da Realist ripped the hearts out of every team trying to win it last season.

"You see, teams are trying to be ready for us this year," Strictly Da Realist player Jamie Foster said. "A lot of teams look like they've boosted up their rosters this year. Hey, don't (get) it twisted, though. We added a few new weapons too. Man, we got some more big men.

Now, Antonio (Minor) can play the two and three spots. We weren't just gonna come back into the season with nothing new. Come on now."

Recreation director Rob Little added: "The teams are really strong this year. They're eight teams, and any one of them can win it all. In the past there's always been one team that pretty much dominated. And that team usually played well in the regular season, then got beat in the playoffs."

Someone always rises to the occasion. This should definitely be an interesting season — simply to see how many teams will rise to the occasion this year." The league play began on

Monday and will conclude the first week of games tonight. The games are played from Monday to Thursday at 14th Street Recreation Center. Games are played at 7:30 p.m. and 8:30 p.m. The eight teams in the league are Strictly Da Realist (1-0), One and Done (1-0), City View (1-0), PSC (1-0), Two Five, City Heat, Hot Boyz and the Young Guns.

The first two nights of action were full of excitement, especially the game between City View and the Young Guns on Monday night. The City View team was paced by the talented Antonio Byrd, D-Money Gathings, Ced Hickman, Kenny "Voodoo" Allison and Tim Edwards. The team also has Josh Howard on the roster.

"Josh more than likely won't

See Ballers on B11

Bobcats, all-stars, track girls

FROM THE HUDDLE

Anthony Hill

The NBA draft comes on at 7 o'clock tonight, and I'm anxious to see who the Bobcats select in the first round. The rumor is that they're going to draft the high school kid out of the ATL, Dwight Howard. If Orlando doesn't pick Emeka Okafor, then that leaves the door open for Charlotte to snag him. But the Magic are almost guaranteed to select Okafor. They'd be crazy not to. Either way, Charlotte's happy.

"We are pleased to have one of the top two picks in the draft," said Charlotte Bobcat head coach Bernie Bickerstaff. "It will certainly give us something to build around in starting with the core that we would like to eventually put together. I think there are some vacillations between

number one in terms of whether it will be Howard or Okafor, but the one thing that I'm real clear about now is that we will be pleased starting our basketball team with either one of those young men. I think they represent what we would like to become in terms of character, competitiveness and the talent.

So, we're back to Howard. I think he's a pretty good baller. He's no LeBron James, but he'll have to do. I didn't take the time to research this, but I think he'll become the first high school kid to be drafted in the first round by an expansion team. It's hard to believe the Bobcats want to build their team around such a young and unproved guy. Sure, he's bullied his way through high school competition, but he's getting ready to play with the big boys. More important, he's getting ready to represent our basketball team.

I can already tell you that he'll get slightly less attention than LeBron, but significantly more than the rest of the rookies simply because he's the high school kid on the new basketball team. And, from guys drafted in Tuesday night's expansion draft, it doesn't look like he's going to have too much help. The Bobcats picked guys like Primoz Brezec (Indiana), Predrag Drobnjak (L.A. Clippers), Brandon Hunter (Boston), Jason Kapono (Cleveland)

See Hill on B4

Former boxer wants to motivate kids

BY ANTHONY HILL
THE CHRONICLE

Fred Whittaker fought his final boxing match over six years ago, when he was beaten by Louis Savaris in New York. Boxing was something very hard for Whittaker to give up. After all, he's been boxing ever since he was 5 years old.

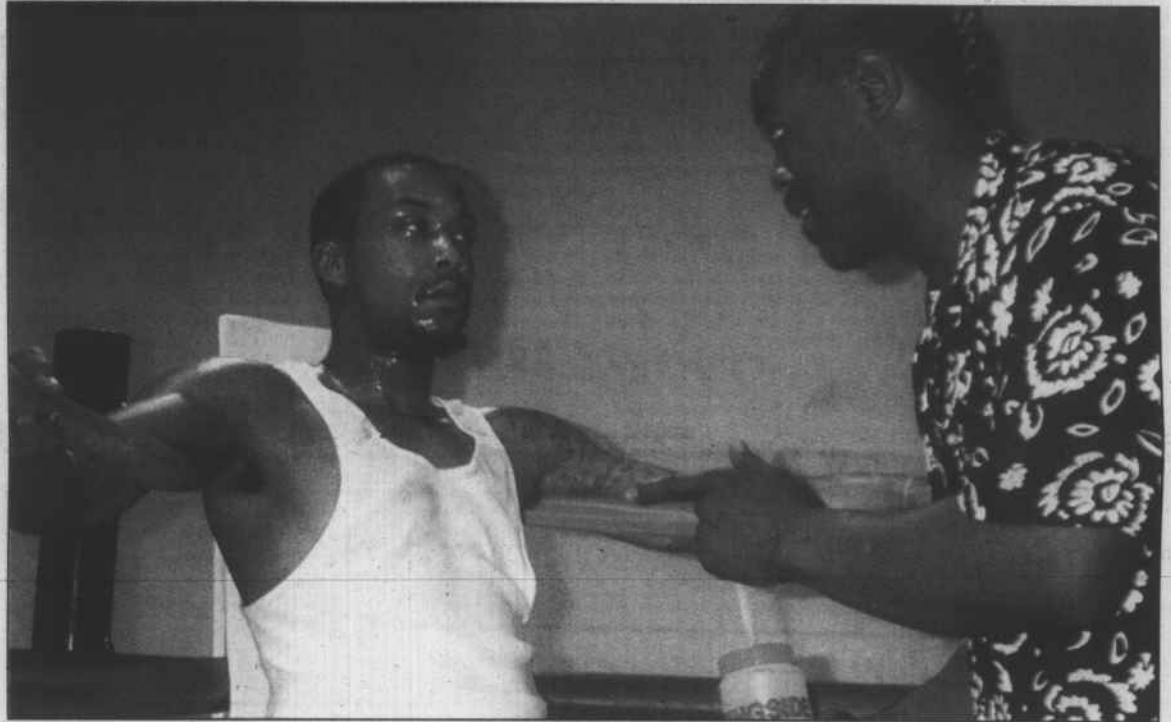
"That's right," Whittaker said. "I started when I was 5. I learned from my dad. He was a professional boxer from Jamaica. He used to travel back and forth, from Jamaica to the United States, just to box. I used to travel with him a lot."

During that time, Whittaker developed a love for the sport most people didn't attempt. He said that he liked the control that it gave him. In most sports, it takes a team effort to be a champion. Whittaker said that in boxing it's strictly up to him. But his journey wasn't as joyous as he thought it would be. After Whittaker finally became a professional boxer in 1982, he still didn't feel like he was going to get the opportunity he deserved. His manager was Don King, and King didn't share the same vision as Whittaker. Whittaker wanted to be a champion.

"He wanted me to use myself to make champions," Whittaker said. "I helped 13 guys win championships."

Some of the guys he helped win championships were James "Buster" Douglas, Mike Tyson, Tim Witherspoon, Michael Dokes, Tony Tubbs and a few others.

"I asked 'DK' when my time was gonna come," Whittaker said. "He told me he would put me there when my time was right. I thought about that for a moment. Then I asked him if he



Former boxer Fred "Yes" Whittaker talks strategy with Philadelphia native Jermaine Cook earlier this week at 14th Street Recreation Center.

thought he had my career in his hand, and he said yes. I then decided to quit the sport."

But he didn't really quit. He's never quit the sport. Whittaker has simply changed his role within the sport. Now he's training young fighters to be all they can be. And he always let's his boxers know that it's possible for them to be world champions someday. He always tries to feed positivity into the heads of his boxers.

"My old trainer (Shadell Morgan) told me that negativity comes into play when you're

empty-minded," Whittaker said. "You should continuously have thoughts about what you want to do and where you want to go."

He currently trains young, amateur fighters at 14th Street Recreation Center. He hopes to be able to bring in more minority kids and help them learn a sport that has taught him a lot.

"I don't know what I would be if it wasn't for boxing," Whittaker said. "I used to be in the streets. I was in a gang. I was up to no good before I started to seriously box. And it's helped

me see the world. The more I won, the more I traveled. So, I tried to continue to win. I wish that my professional career would've turned out like it was supposed to. But God makes all things happen for a reason. And I want to help out the community kids — the Hispanics, the blacks and whites. I want to help them make a difference."

Some of Whittaker's fighters are well on their way to good things. He doesn't want their money if or when they make it big. Whittaker just wants them to understand that he's helping

to give them a better chance at a good life.

"I know what these streets are like," Whittaker concluded. "I can relate to almost any kid out there. I just want them to know that someone cares about their future. And I am willing to help them get to where they need to be in life, through boxing. Ask any of my boxers: the gym is like a home away from home."

Contact Fred "Yes" Whittaker at 771-1955 or at the gym at 727-2891.

Yellowjacket girls are poised for State Games

BY ANTHONY HILL
THE CHRONICLE

There shouldn't be too many questions heading into next season as to whether the Carver girls are going to be good or not — especially after last season. The Yellowjackets were thought to be going through a rebuilding year a season ago and ended up finishing the season with a 27-2 record.

"That kind of surprised me," Carver head coach Gerald Carter said. "I knew we were going to be young last year, but I was more concerned about where we were going to get leadership from and how far that leadership would take us. I knew that we had some talent. It all began with the summer that we had last year."

The Yellowjackets are expecting another great summer, as well as a gold medal in

the State Games this weekend. Last summer the girls really bonded and got themselves ready for the upcoming season. They really used the summer days with each other to their advantage.

"The same thing is true for this summer," Carver athletic director Alfred Poe said. "The girls have been coming in every morning, at 10:30, for three weeks. They've really been getting themselves prepared for the State Games and next season. The juniors and seniors really look like they're stepping up and taking charge."

Carver should definitely be one of the favorites to win, especially with the games being played in their hometown. And the Yellowjackets are still one of the more talented squads around. The team will have their first test tomorrow morning at 10:30 against

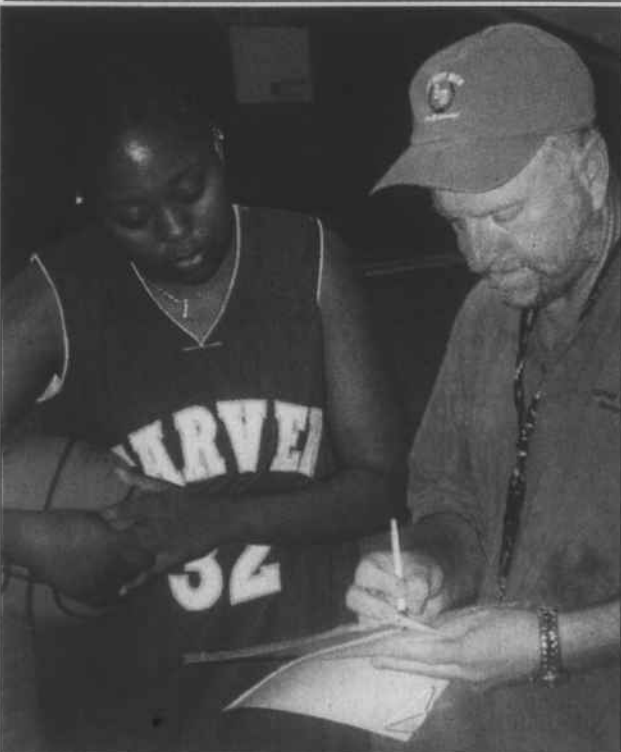
Southwest Guilford in the first round of the State Games.

"They're a very good team," Carter said of Southwest Guilford. "There are gonna be a lot of good teams in this tournament. There's a competitive group of teams each year. We're just trying to get back in the swing of things. We're really just now getting back in the gym. This was our first full week of practice, so we're a little rusty, but the girls are really coming along. I think we'll be fine."

Poe added: "I think these girls can accomplish a lot this year. It's strictly up to them, and I think they understand that. I think they'll do well."

Carver almost didn't even get a chance to prove it had the best squad in the state, though. The Yellowjackets were denied clearance into the games until about three weeks ago. They

See Carver on B3



Carver coach Gerald Carter discusses a few wrinkles with Dominica Lambson. The Yellowjackets will play tomorrow at 10:30 a.m. They will play their second game at 3 p.m. at the Annex.