

# SPORTS WEEK

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Sports Columnist

## Everything is not okay in La La Land

Entering this season, the Los Angeles Clippers were one of the favorites to win the NBA Finals. As of Jan. 24, the Clippers' record is 31-14 and they are currently seeded third in the Western Conference. From the outside looking in, the team seems like they are playing well, but reports have started to come out of the locker room stating some players are unhappy with the "preferential treatment" star players are receiving.

When I first heard of the reports, I thought it was maybe a reporter being a little overzealous about something he or she heard, but then I began to see the same things from multiple sources. Now I'm starting to believe the Clippers may have some team chemistry issues.

Before adding Paul George and Kawhi Leonard, the Clippers were a scrappy group of players that overachieved all last season. They even gave the Western Conference champions, the Golden State Warriors, all they could handle in last season's Western Conference semifinals. This season it doesn't seem like they have that same camaraderie.

According to the Athletic, there are multiple teammates "who have struggled with the organization's preferential treatment" of its superstar players. There was a report of a walk-through being cancelled when many players were "eager to work." It has been said that the players believe Leonard made the executive decision to have it cancelled, however head coach Doc Rivers denies the claims.

I somewhat find it hard to believe that NBA players are foreign to the concept of preferential treatment toward superstar players. That has been the way of professional sports for as long as I have been a sports fan. I am not sure if the Clippers' role players feel their superstars are taking advantage of their leverage to the detriment of the team, but it must be bad if we are hearing these sorts of issues.

There have been grumblings from the players as well. Montrezl Harrell has never been one to hold his tongue and after a recent loss he said, "I don't know brother, I don't know, and maybe that's the problem right there," when asked about the feel in the locker room.

I can understand how some players could be upset by how Leonard and George have come in and somewhat upset the team dynamic. Most of the Clippers' players have had to give it their all every day of their careers to make it to this point, so to have two superstar players come in and seemingly not do the same, I can see how that could make some players angry.

But the other players

See La La Land on B2



Photos by Alphonso Abbott Jr.

BY TIMOTHY RAMSEY  
THE CHRONICLE

The JDL Fast Track is the place to be for in-

door track in the Triad Area. From high school athletes, all the way down to those just beginning their AAU (Amateur Athletic Union) careers, the Fast Track brings the best and bright-

est of what the area has to offer. Last week, some of the area's future hopefuls looked to make their mark.

## Tatum quietly turning Lady Bruins into winners

BY TIMOTHY RAMSEY  
THE CHRONICLE

The Piedmont International University (PIU) Lady Bruins basketball team is having a very successful season. In only her second season at the helm, Toccara Tatum has her team ranked 9th in Division I of the NCCAA (National Christian College Athletic Association) with a 13-4 record overall (at the time this article was written).

"It is a surprise for me; I say that because we (coaches) have always come in with the mindset of one game at a time, so to be where we are now and knowing we are only going one day at a time and everyone else now gets to see it is awesome," said Tatum about her expectations for the year.

Before PIU, Tatum, a North-South Carolina native, coached at several high schools such as Lexington, Glenn and Parkland. Tatum is a graduate of Ferrum College and holds several records at the school and was a Division III All-American while there. She has recently been nominated to the Ferrum College Hall of Fame. The opportunity for the Lady Bruins job came

about following a recommendation to the athletic director from Carver High School, the great Porsche Jones. Coaching on the collegiate level has always been a dream for Tatum and now that she has her chance, she is putting her all into it.

"Coaching is my calling and I have always known that's what drives me," she said. "It has always been a career goal of mine to coach on the college level."

Year one at PIU was very challenging for Tatum, she said. "I had the coaching part of it down, but it was still a lot for me to learn as far as recruiting and managing of the time that was outside of the court."

The Lady Bruins finished last season 16-12 overall and lost in the South Region Championship. Tatum stated that her first year was a success in her eyes, even though they had to fight through injuries and teaching the young ladies how to be student athletes on this level.

With the success Tatum and the Lady Bruins enjoyed in her first year,

See Tatum on B2



Photo by Timothy Ramsey

Toccara Tatum has the Lady Bruins ranked #9 in the country in Division I of the NCCAA.