

With James Cuthbertson



James

Prep Chatter

This is especially hard to write because it is something that I never expected to happen. It seems that I would always have someone supportive like Mr. Bill Johnson around to help me when I needed it and to guide me when I requested it and sometimes to just tell when I was going in the wrong direction.

You see, I remember when I was an aggressive, young reporter fresh out of journalism school at the University of North Carolina and I thought that I knew everything about writing. I was recruited to work for the Charlotte News (afternoon newspaper now out of business) and I was ready to conquer the world. Well, it didn't take long for me to realize that I was going to be used for cosmetics and that my talent was not really important.

Disgusted, disgruntled and disappointed, I called up Mr. Johnson one day and asked him for an interview. The year was 1974 and he hired me. I gave my one week notice to the News and became a Charlotte Post reporter. I have been employed either full-time or part-time for the past 12 years.

How will I remember him?

He was kind!

I remember when the University of North Carolina at Charlotte made the National Invitational Tournament semifinals in New York City and I just walked into his office one day and I said, "Mr. Johnson, how about financing a trip to New York City to cover UNCC's 49ers in the finals?" He opened his wallet, handed me his credit card and said, "Go for it." I was shocked that he was so frehearted.



Willie L. Johnson

He often would say to me, "James, you and I both have a great love for sports and you are not going to be happy unless you are doing it full time."

He was receptive to new ideas.

One day in 1976, I walked into his office and said, "Mr. Johnson, it is a shame that the black seniors in Charlotte who are so talented are overlooked when the Charlotte Observer picks its All-Star scholars.

He said, "What do you want to do to correct the situation?"

I said, "I think we ought to come up with a special section honoring our black talented seniors." He said, "What do you want to call it?" I thought for a minute and replied, "How about 'Top Ten Seniors?'" He looked at me and smiled and said that is a great idea.

He continued, "Come up with the criteria and get the information from the guidance counselors and we will print a special section."

That was in 1976 and now the Senior of the Year and the Top Ten Seniors for the Charlotte Post are one of the most coveted titles that any black senior could get in Charlotte and Mecklenburg County.

He believed in youth.

Mr. Johnson was not full of fanfare and not a glory-hog. He quietly went his ways and in so doing affected the lives of so many people.

Last year, I went out on the limb because I believed in him and I felt he deserved more recognition than he had gotten. I believe that humans should be rewarded in life and not in death so that one can join in the pleasure of recognition for outstanding accomplishments.

With this in mind, I picked six semifinalists, three girls and three boys for nominations for an award that will be given this year for the second time for outstanding achievements in athletics and academics. This is the "Bill Johnson Award" and it will be given in July at the Churchworker of the Year banquet.

He said, "James, what are you doing? Who gave you the authority?"

I said, "Mr. Johnson, you have done more for black youngsters in this community through your newspaper than anybody and you surely deserve this award and no matter what we are going to give it in your name."

He smiled and laughed and said, "You know I guess you are right."

I will miss his smile. The stern one, when he said you know that you can write better than this or you need to put more of yourself in your work.

And the pleasant one, when he said, "James, you did a good job."

Walking into the lobby of the main office at the Charlotte Post and not being able to turn to the right and steal a few minutes of his valuable time has been disheartening for the past few weeks.

He guided my career in writing.

He would always tell me that I had great talent and I should use it more often (chuckle).

I learned more from Mr. Johnson in one year from laying out a paper to selling advertising than I learned in two years of graduate school in journalism. This was the profession on ground level and through him I learned how a newspaper operates and how it stays in operation.

He was always there when I needed him.

Mr. Johnson was never quick to judge people and one of his favorite statements was that "Man was not put on Earth to be a perfect person and that whether you did good or bad someone was around to criticize you."

He said that one should always give his best and try to be the best person that they could be.

I remember one time when the bottom had dropped out of my world and I remember the support that he gave me that helped to get me through some trying times.

He was like a father to me. Always there.

Mr. Johnson, I loved you and I will miss you. But everything you stood for will remain and although you will not be around to talk to me, your spirit will remain to guide me.

You are not gone. You are just away.

Brown, Howell, Johnson: Smith's Superlatives

By James Cuthbertson
Post Sports Writer

Johnson C. Smith Superlatives in the NCAA final basketball statistics included Vincent Brown, Cassandra Howell and Dante Johnson.

Brown was fifth in the NCAA Division II free throw percentage race, with 86 percent. He sank 96 of 114.

Howell was 14th in field goal percentage with 56.8 percent. She sank 162 of 285 shots. She was 22nd in rebounding with an average of 11.5 per game. She had a total of 253 in the 22 games that she played.

Johnson was 22nd in field goal percentage with 59.5 percent. He hit 207 of 348 in 29 games for the Golden Bulls.

The Golden Bulls were ninth in the nation in free throw shooting percentage with 73.5 percent, a school record. They sank 477 of 649.

Big Coliseum games with Hampton on Saturday, December 6, Norfolk State on December 15, North Carolina Central on February 11, Winston-Salem State on February 14, and Gardner-Webb on February 16 highlight the Golden Bulls' schedule.

Doubleheaders will feature the men's and women's teams.

The JCSU women will host the Women's Invitational Tournament November 28-29 at Brayboy.

Benedict College will play a home and home series with the Golden Bulls on Saturday, November 22, in Columbia, S.C., and come home on Wednesday, November 26, to play in Brayboy.

Virginia State will be the first conference game. That will take place November 29 in Petersburg, Virginia.

The Golden Bulls will open their home conference season on Thursday, December 4, when the team hosts Elizabeth City.

Home doubleheaders featuring the men's and women's teams will feature Elizabeth City on December 4, Livingstone on January 10, Paine on January 17, St. Augustine's on February 19, Fayetteville State on January 28, and Shaw on February 9.

Away doubleheaders will feature St. Paul's on December 18, Shaw on January 3, Virginia Union on January 6, North Carolina Central on January 14, Livingstone on January 19, St. Augustine's on January 22, Bowie State on January 24, Winston-Salem State on January 31, and Paine on February 7 in Augusta, Ga.

The other games will feature a home and away series with Barber-Scotia. The Bulls are at home on December 10 and at Concord on



Cassandra Howell
.....Totalled 253 points



Dante Johnson
.....Ranks 22nd in FGP

February 3.

The Lady Golden Bulls will play Virginia State on February 4, and at Fayetteville State on November 21.

The CIAA men's tournament is in Richmond, VA, February 25-28. The CIAA ladies' tournament will be held from February 24-28.

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