

Eyes On The NBA Prize, Byron Dinkins Presses Onward

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he was reminded of something that would haunt him through most of his career - he was the smallest kid on the team. Then came his senior season.

"My senior year in high school was the most fun I've ever had playing basketball," Dinkins said. "Our gym was full every Tuesday and Friday night. People wanted to see the little skinny kid at East Mecklenburg they were

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Byron Dinkins

reading about in the newspapers. It was fun."

Dinkins' performance was good enough to attract UNCC's interest, and Dinkins became Mullins' first signee. He went from being listed as 155 pounds ("I weighed 135 pounds but I guess they figured no one would believe it," he says) to a Sun Belt Conference champion

onship as a 170-pound junior. After going undrafted in 1989, Dinkins stuck with the

Rockets as a free agent. The next year Houston cut him; after a short stint in San Antonio, the Spurs did the same. Pro basketball's business side took its toll.

"I was an emotional mess. I needed to be home with my family and gather my thoughts," he said.

Next came the Continental Basketball Association, the NBA's minor leagues. Dinkins bided his time between Rapid City and Columbus, Ohio. He also got a couple of calls from the Indiana Pacers and Charlotte Hornets. Again, he didn't make the final cut, undone by guaran-

teed contracts and the numbers game. But the traveling wasn't over.

Last year, Dinkins played in Germany for the Brandt-Hagen team, compiling good numbers and a huge phone bill. "I was very homesick the first two or three months," he said. "I called home a lot."

Now Dinkins is back home in Charlotte, running a camp and working on his game. What he does most, though, is wait by the phone for an NBA team to call.

"Byron can play in the NBA, and if I can help him, I am," Mullins said. "He can

now hold his own physical-ly. He just needs an opportunity."

Dinkins is approaching a self-described "crossroads." He has to start thinking of financial security. His agent, Herbert Ruddy, is working on deals with the higher-paying leagues in Spain and Italy, although his German team wants him back. But playing in the European arena doesn't satisfy Dinkins' real desire.

"I know I am an NBA

player," he said. "Regardless of what happens with these other opportunities, and whether it's this year, I am going to take another shot at an NBA roster. I don't want any doubt in my mind that I gave myself every opportunity to play in the NBA."

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East Mecklenburg's Brandon Sinclair is hauled down by Greensboro Dudley defenders during the Eagles' 16-12 loss last week at East.

PHOTO: CALVIN FERGUS

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SPORTS SHORTS

Baseball
• Charlotte Knights (Class AAA) vs. Norfolk Sept. 3-4 at Knights Castle. For ticket information, call 36-HOMER.

Basketball
• Sugar Creek basketball competition, Sept. 4 at Sugar Creek Recreation Center. Slam dunk, three-point and 3-on-3 competition for 10-18 and 19-over competitors. Registration fee \$10 and forms are available at recreation center. Deadline for registration is Sept. 2. For more information, call Era Coleman at 596-7579.

Football
• New Queen City Classic, Johnson C. Smith vs. N.C. Central Sept. 25 at Memorial Stadium, 7:30 p.m.

Tickets are \$12 in advance; \$15 at the gate. For ticket information, call (704) 561-2278, (704) 378-1090 or (919) 560-5170.

• Wilmington Sportsmen's Classic, Livingstone vs. Virginia Union Sept. 11 at Legion Stadium, Wilmington, N.C. For ticket information, call (704) 638-5667

Golf
• Birdie Binge, 8 a.m. Sept. 11 at Sunset Hills Golf Course.

Eighteen-hole tournament with teams selected by blind

draw. Entry fee is \$55 and must be received by Sept. 8.

Mail certified checks or money orders to David Taylor, 8148 Dover-

dale Lane, Charlotte, N.C. 28217. For more information, call 523-8498.

• NFL Alumni/Food Lion Charity Golf Tournament, Oct. 4 at Cramer Mountain Country Club. Individual entries is \$350 and \$1,400 for teams. Captain's choice format with 30 teams of four players and pro-player captain. Athletes scheduled to appear include Mike Stanl (Raiders), Joe Bostic (Cardinals) and Bennie Cunningham (Steelers). For more information on entry information, call Kara Watson at (704) 568-2520.

Tennis
• U.S. vs. Bahamas, Sept. 24-26 at Olde Providence Racquet Club, American team consists of MaliVal Washington and Andre Agassi.

For more information, call Olde Providence.

Overtime
• LeRoy T. Walker, U.S. Olympic Committee president, will receive Charlotte World Affairs Council's 1993 World Citizen Award Sept. 14 at 12 p.m. during community luncheon at Government House Hotel, 201 S. McDowell St. Introduction will be made by Julius Chambers, N.C. Central University chancellor.

Luncheon sponsorship and table for 10 is \$200; individual reservation is \$15. Payment should be mailed to Council For International Visitors, 322, Hawthorne Ln. Charlotte, N.C. 28204. For more information, call Vivian Williams at 333-8099.

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