

# Basketball legend returns to roots in CIAA

By Erica Singleton  
FOR THE CHARLOTTE POST

Fifty years of tradition sit between the year Sam Jones last participated in a CIAA game and today, yet Jones still gets involved.

Though known mostly as one of the "Jones Boys," part of the offensive duo that included K.C. Jones on the Boston Celtics, Sam Jones is a three-time all-CIAA player from N.C. Central. He's been named to the Basketball Hall of Fame, was selected to the NBA Silver Anniversary team in 1970, and then named one of the top 50 players in NBA history in 1996, but basketball, NBA play particularly, was not Jones' first love.

"First of all, I was just happy to get a scholarship to college, so I could get my education," said the Launburg, N.C., native. "I never thought about playing in the NBA. There were no NBA teams in North Carolina at that time or any teams

south of Baltimore, Maryland."

Jones said his dream then was to become an orthopedic surgeon.

"I made A's in anatomy, physiology and kinesiology...but I didn't have the finances or the money to get where I wanted to be."

Just the same, Jones is thankful for the opportunity he had with the CIAA, and continues to marvel at how grand the week long events have become.

"When I had the opportunity to be drafted, unexpectedly, in the first round from a small school like NCCU, with just 1200 students, I thought that was amazing," explained Jones.

"To play in the CIAA...was nothing like it is today," added Jones. "This is an extravaganza! It opens doors for both men and women, it gives us a lot of opportunity to really progress and see what's going on at the next level by

playing before these large crowds. That's something I never had the chance to see."

Jones played under Hall of Fame coach John McClendon at N.C. Central, scoring 1,770 points between 1953-1957. He was the eighth pick overall in the 1957 NBA draft, chosen by Boston. His 12-year career included five All-Star game appearances, 871 regular season games and 154 playoff games. His 10 NBA championships, including eight in a row (1958-66), are only exceeded by teammate Bill Russell's 11. Considered one of the NBA's most prolific shooters, Jones scored 15,411 points (17.7 ppg), plus 2,909 (18.9 ppg) more in the playoffs. It has been said that, "Sam Jones may not have invented the jump shot, but he sure was the first player to perfect it." Jones retired from the NBA in 1969, after which he was inducted into the Hall of

Fame. His years since retiring have been filled with many activities, including teaching in Montgomery County public schools in Maryland, and even coaching at N.C. Central in 1974, but there's only one thing he has done continually, which is attending the CIAA tournament, and watch it evolve.

"Not only watching it grow and change...but I have been a part of it since I retired from the NBA in 1969, so you are talking about 38 years," Jones said. "Each and every year I come."

Jones explained that as a player, you rarely got to see the women play, until the finals, so he makes sure to watch the games, among

other things.

"You have all these people coming back. It's like a homecoming. You see your friends from college...you find out about other friends and why they are not here. I just love it," he said.

Jones understands the opportunities in the CIAA, and hopes to impart that to today's youth.

"It's hard to get across to these kids that because you go to a smaller school, doesn't mean you don't have the same opportunities as those at larger schools," said Jones. "Basketball is basketball. If you can play, someone is going to see you."

Jones also finds it hard, to accept that schools continue

to leave the CIAA.

"It's bittersweet because my school wants to go," he said. "I don't think they have the money. [You should] learn from the past...they had been in the MEAC, and they did not succeed."

"Many of the alumni believe it's wrong...that they shouldn't leave the CIAA," Jones said. "(Winston Salem State) left, but you know what's ironic? The presidents who put us in these situations (Winston-Salem's Harold Martin and NCCU's James H. Ammons) have left. They've left us stranded."

"They are the ones who put us in this. How do we

NBA

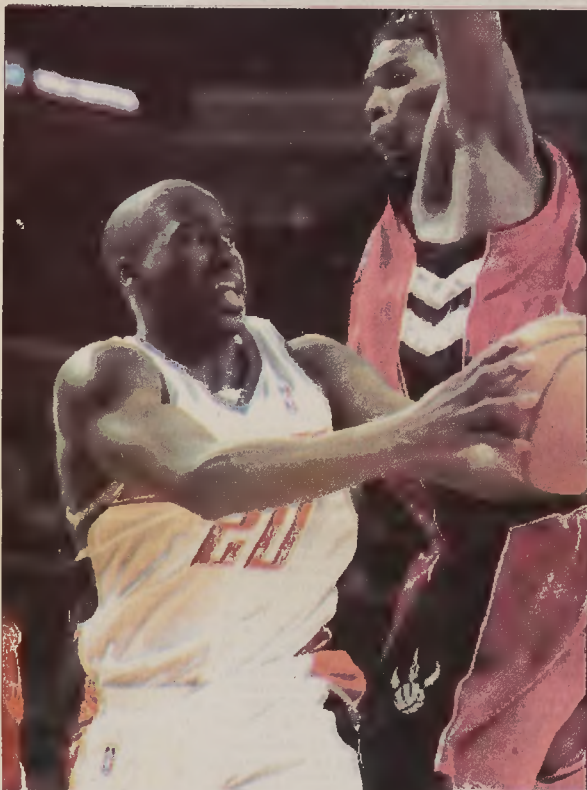


PHOTO: CURTIS WILSON

Raymond Felton promised the Charlotte Bobcats would make the NBA playoffs in 2007, but that's looking less likely with a sub-.500 team.

## P-word Bobcats are least likely to use for now is playoffs

Continued from page 1C

injury, forward/center Emeke Okafor was the only player in the Eastern Conference who ranked in the top five in rebounds, blocks, double-doubles and field goal percentage. He still remains the team's leading rebounder, and is in the top three in the league in rebounds and blocks. Adam Morrison ranks second in the league among rookies, behind Portland's Brandon Roy, averaging 13 points in an average 31 minutes per game. And Gerald Wallace continues to carry the Bobcats, scoring 30-plus points in both the Sacramento and Utah games, and scoring an average 23.2 points on the road.

OK, now for the "P" word you've been waiting for: playoffs

Bobcats guard Raymond Felton started off the season predicting that this season's Bobcats would make the playoffs.

"We stay healthy; I can see us in the fifth or sixth slot in

the Eastern Conference. You know that's how confident I am in my team...that's the talent that we have here," he said.

However, Felton predicted that the Bobcats would also make the playoffs last season, and though while not as severe this year, injuries have still hampered part of the team's progress, keeping some of their most successful line-ups from playing on the court together. Predictions aside, the picture is dim for the team considering the current state of affairs.

Tied for last place in their division and 12.5 games back, the Bobcats would need to go on a Dallas like winning streak to even be considered. The team is not dead last in the conference, Milwaukee and Boston are behind them, but it would take an enormous downward spiral by New York, New Jersey, Indiana and Orlando, plus a tremendous effort by the Bobcats to make it to fifth or sixth. Yet,

in spite of it all, Felton continues to tell reporters he's confident the team will make the playoffs.

So to round this all up, the last "P" that should be mentioned is perseverance.

Charlotte's leading inside man, Okafor, was sent home on the third game of the road trip,



May

to have an MRI done on his calf. It's unclear when Okafor will return to the court, but it is clear his team needs him.

Sean May has sat out 17 consecutive games with a bruised knee, while Brevin Knight is slowly getting back into the swing of things after missing 21 games with an abdominal injury and surgery. In sports, you never know what might happen, it's not definite that the Bobcats won't make the playoffs, however if they do, it won't be easy.

The management and staff of

**B & R BODY SHOP**

**Congratulates**  
**Johnson C. Smith University**  
**Men's & Women's Basketball Teams**  
for your outstanding athletic ability and sportsmanship throughout the year

Bring this ad in on your next body repair service visit and receive **\$50.00 off** your total estimate!

Bobby Height, Marketing & Public Relations Director

<b>ROCKHILL</b>	<b>EAST</b>	<b>PINEVILLE</b>	<b>MONROE</b>	<b>"New" NORTH</b>
955 N. Anderson Rd. 803-985-4444 FAX 985-4485	6111 E. Ind. Blvd. 704-972-1972 FAX 972-1999	9248 S. Blvd. 704-554-9393 FAX 554-9754	1839 Williams Rd. 704-296-5005 FAX 296-5004	115 S. Dwellie St. 704-644-4911

I am no longer just an observer.

By volunteering and supporting United Way's Community Care Fund you can help address the issues you care about most. Like providing support to struggling parents. Be moved. Because without you, there's no way.