

Pickup basketball

Summer meant practice for players

By GENE UPCHURCH
Sports Editor

DURHAM — For a lot of people, it was like a dream come true. There before them, within reaching distance, were some of the greatest college basketball players in the area doing what they do best — playing basketball.

For several weeks this summer, area players got together nightly in the sweltering heat of the new intramural building on the Duke University campus to keep that fine edge on their skills by practicing in pickup games.

So, they hustled, they sweated and they had fun without those annoying whistles of stripe-shirted officials.

Younger players, such as UNC freshman Al Wood, and Duke freshman Gene Banks,

got a chance to show their stuff and to learn some lessons about playing in the conference.

Banks, even on a night when he was loafing, looked rather sensational. He was one of the most highly-touted high school seniors this year and should not disappoint any Duke fans. He'll be joining an already-proven Duke frontcourt in sophomore Mike Gminski and senior Jim Spanarkel. In the pickup games, he had confidence and the moves against more experienced players to bolster that confidence.

There has been talk that Al Wood will replace Walter Davis in the Carolina lineup. And it's hard not to think about Davis when Wood is palying. His physical characteristics look like Davis and he handles himself on the court much like Davis does.

These pickup games were popular with area fans, too. It was nothing for 100 or so fans to turn out to see the games.

A 15-year-old girl sat cross-legged on the floor at midcourt with a piece of notebook paper adorned with autographs of every big name player on the floor — Mitch Kupchak, Tate Armstrong, Marc Crow, Terri Chili, Wood, Banks...

"Oh, I don't know why I came," she said. "I guess I just like basketball." But her eyes lit up with a strange sparkle when the shirtless Armstrong walked by.

"Hell, I came to see Banks," said one slightly drunk Iron Duke, the Blue Devil

version of a Rams Clubber. He held a Duke blue cup with a mixed drink. "And we're gonna be tough this year, too. Why, if we're not No. 1, I don't know what I'll do."

Duke basketball officials had planned a press conference during the summer to introduce Banks to the area media. This was designed to give the writers something to write about and to get them to leave Banks alone so he could concentrate on his basketball and adjustment to the area.

Banks, at the time, was enrolled in a special course at Duke to help minority and disadvantaged students adjust to the school's academics.

The NCAA, however, got wind of the planned press conference and told ACC officials they had better tell Duke to cancel it. The ACC did and Duke did.

The NCAA said Banks was not a student yet because he had not actually begun his freshman year and thus was ineligible to meet the press.

Phil Ford spent the summer selling cars for a Ford dealership in Durham.

The dealership ran ads in area newspapers for at least two months "welcoming" Ford to their sales staff. The ads, with his name in large print, contained a photo of Ford in a business suit.

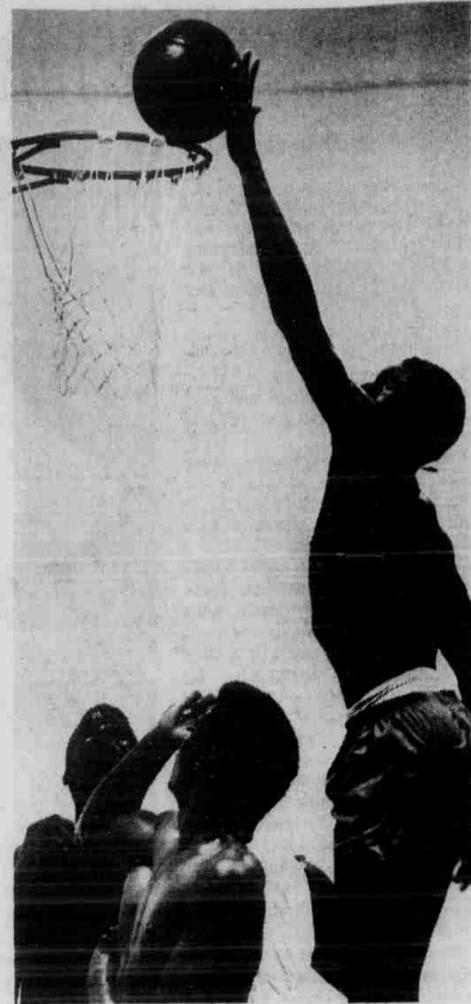
Some people said it might be an NCAA violation for a college player to be in an ad like that. But as long as he was in a business suit — not a Carolina basketball uniform — and as long as there was no mention in the ad of him being a college basketball player, it was legal, as far as the NCAA is concerned.

Dave Hanners, a member of the UNC varsity until he graduated in 1975, also was hired by the dealership to be a salesman. The company also ran ads about Hanners, except he was in uniform and it was mentioned that he was a former Carolina player. He also is the junior varsity basketball coach for Carolina.



Staff photos by L. C. Barbour

Phil Ford, above, drives past former Duke basketball player Tate Armstrong during a pickup game at Duke this summer while Walter Davis, right, towers above some junior-college players. Night after night, the players tried to match skills with each other to keep in practice.



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Rhames injures leg in scrimmage

Starting defensive tackle Bunn Rhames pulled a hamstring muscle in his leg during a scrimmage Saturday and is a questionable starter for Carolina's football opener against

Kentucky this Saturday in Lexington.

Officials say it will be later this week before it can be decided if Rhames will be able to play against Kentucky.

Rhames injured the leg while running back an interception and had to be helped off the playing field.

Wingback Mel Collins is recovering from a sprained ankle and did not participate in the scrimmage. He is expected to be ready for the opener.

Tom LaGarde has signed a contract with the Denver Nuggets of the National Basketball Association, it was announced this weekend.

The 6-foot-10 center was the Nugget's first round draft choice and will serve as a backup to veteran Dan Issel at center and at forward, Nuggets coach Larry Brown said. LaGarde started for two seasons at

Carolina and lettered for four seasons. He missed the final 13 games of the 1977 season because of a knee injury.

He scored 1,007 points and pulled down 545 rebounds during his career of 102 games at Carolina. He also played for the U.S. team in the 1975 Pan American Games and on the 1976 Olympic team that won the gold medal at Montreal.

Tryouts for mike man — the person who leads the cheers at home football games — will be held at 6:30 p.m. Wednesday in Carmichael Auditorium.

Final tryouts will be held at 5 p.m. Thursday in Carmichael and students are invited to attend these tryouts to cheer for the mike man they like best, cheerleaders said.

Persons with questions about mike man should call 942-1535 or 933-3623.

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