

McGriff Can Be Integral Part Of UNCW Basketball

South Brunswick basketball phenomenon Preston McGriff's decision to sign with UNC-Wilmington last week is good news in a lot of ways.

It's good news for Preston, who gets a chance to prove himself at the college level in a positive setting close to home.

It's good news for UNCW, which gets a gifted athlete with good work habits and his own local fan club.

And it's good news for South Brunswick fans who will be able to continue following Preston's career.

UNCW Head Coach Kevin Eastman said a lot of college coaches saw McGriff as an attractive recruit because of his physical abilities and size.

At 6 feet, 11 inches, McGriff can do things in the paint that most other guys just can't do. He's the all-time leading scorer at South Brunswick and probably blocked more shots than anyone too.

But Eastman says physical attributes aren't the only thing that he likes about McGriff.

"When you dig a little deeper, you find a really nice man, a guy who has kept his nose clean and a good person," Eastman said last Wednesday, a day after the signing. "Preston wants to be successful in all parts of his life."

It remains to be seen how Preston McGriff will fit in to the rising Seahawk basketball program, but Eastman hopes he'll have an impact.

He's ever mindful, though, that Preston will only be a freshman next season and that he comes from a relatively small school.

"He hasn't on a day in, day out basis seen the level of play he's going to see here," Eastman said. "We want him to be an integral part of the program for next four years."

Eastman says he thinks McGriff made a smart move picking UNCW over some of the bigger schools farther from his Southport home.

"I'm a big believer in kids staying close to home," he said. "I think it gives them a head start on the rest of their life."

Eastman said McGriff has a positive image in the community, and people will continue to see him and hear about him in Wilmington.

All too often, Eastman says high school stars who leave their home town are quickly forgotten. "I think it's a good move for Preston."

It's also a good move for UNCW, giving an opportunity to a local kid who just might end up paying big dividends.

"I guess it's a big thing," Eastman said of signing a local player. "I'm excited about getting a good player and he just happens to be from the area."

McGriff was the go-to guy his last two years at South Brunswick. He was called on to carry the team a lot of nights and delivered most of the time.

Eastman says that won't be the case at UNCW, which has already signed two other solid high school players this year.

"It was a break-through year of sorts," Eastman said. "We really want to try and build this program from the inside out in everything we do. In recruiting, that means going after local kids first."

Daniels Shines

Speaking of local kids making the grade in college basketball, former West Brunswick star Ricky Daniels had an outstanding freshman year at Anderson (S.C.) Junior College.

Daniels averaged 15 points, 9.3 rebounds, 4 assists and 3 blocked shots a game for the Anderson Trojans, who finished the year at 20-7.

Ricky helped lead his team to a tie with Spartanburg Methodist for the Carolinas Junior College Conference title and a second-place finish in the region.

The West Brunswick product earned spots on the all-conference and all-region teams. "He did a super job," Head Coach Steve Lytton said. "He's fun to coach and a good team member. He works hard."

Daniels shot 61 percent from the floor last season, but said he still needs to work on his outside jump shots and shooting off the dribble.

He plans to stay at Anderson Junior College for another year before moving on to a four-year school.

"It's a great place," Daniels said in a telephone interview last week from Anderson. "It's a good atmosphere. All the people are nice."

Ballard Recognized

North Brunswick's Maduka Ballard, who set a state record earlier this month when he cleared 7 feet, 2 inches, in the high jump, was recognized in last Thursday's edition of *USA Today*.

Ballard has the best high school high jump in the nation so far this year, according to the listing compiled by the *Track and Field Writers of America* in conjunction with *Track and Field News*.

Ballard will compete Saturday in the Wake Forest Relays high school meet in Winston-Salem. A jump of 7 feet, 4 inches, would guarantee an invitation to the U.S. Olympic trials this summer.

North Takes Fifth In Area Softball Tournament

North Brunswick placed fifth in the Southern Shore Invitational high school softball tournament last week at Hoggard in Wilmington.

After losing the first game 17-11 to Pender on Friday, the Lady Scorpions rebounded with a 7-6 win over Dixon and 13-12 win over Hoggard on Saturday.

South Brunswick's Lady Cougars beat host Hoggard 13-11 in the opening round, but lost to Larey 10-0 and Pender 6-3 on Saturday.

New Hanover's Lady Wildcats won the tournament with a 4-3 win over Larey in the championship game.

North Brunswick returns to action Friday with a Waccamaw 2-A Conference home game against West Columbus. South Brunswick plays at East Bladen Friday.

Shell Point Bombs Bay In Coed League

Shell Point bombed Soldier Bay 18-2 in Brunswick Baptist Association Coed Softball League play Saturday at Supply Park.

In other games Supply held off Oak Island 12-11, Antioch nipped Gospel Center 11-10 and Faith defeated Town Creek 14-4.

League play started April 18, with four games played each Saturday night at the county park in Supply.

Coed Softball League Standings As Of April 30		
TEAM	WINS	LOSSES
Supply	2	0
Shell Point	2	0
Antioch	2	0
Oak Island	1	1
Faith	1	1
Town Creek	0	2
Soldier Bay	0	2
Gospel Center	0	2

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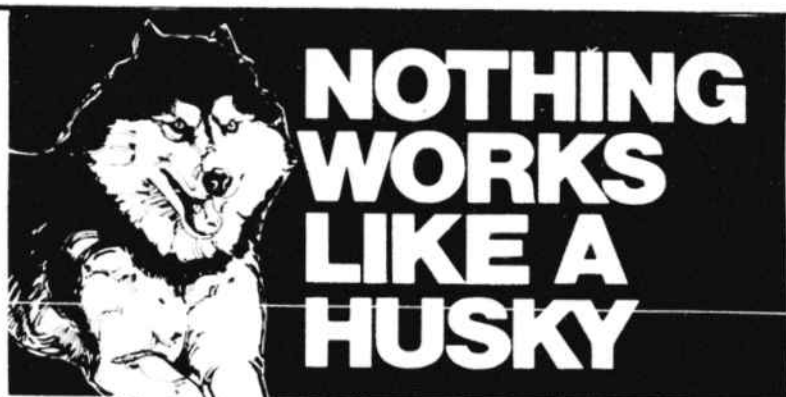
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