

Section C

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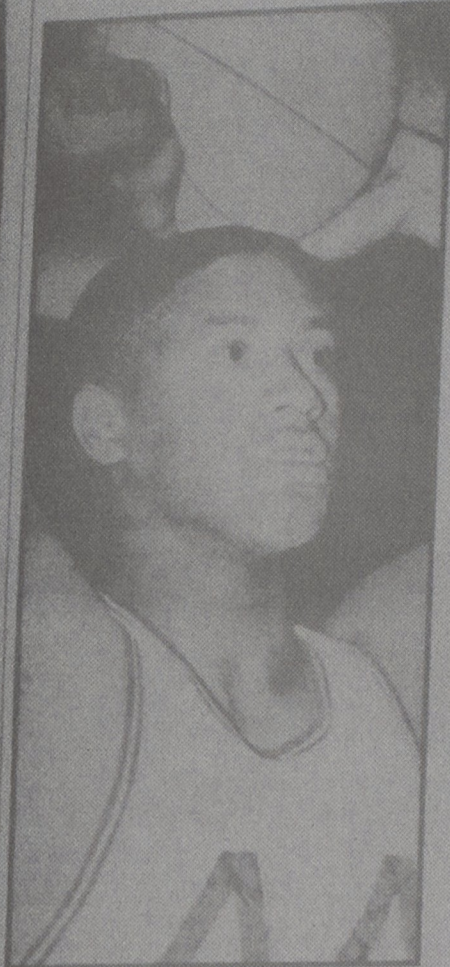
People

TV LISTINGS

Food

Timing Was Right For Adams

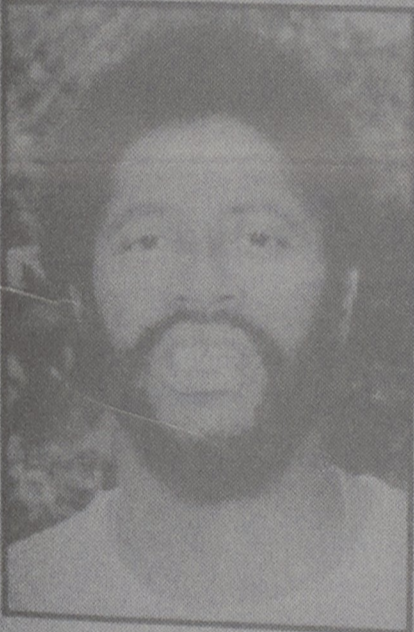
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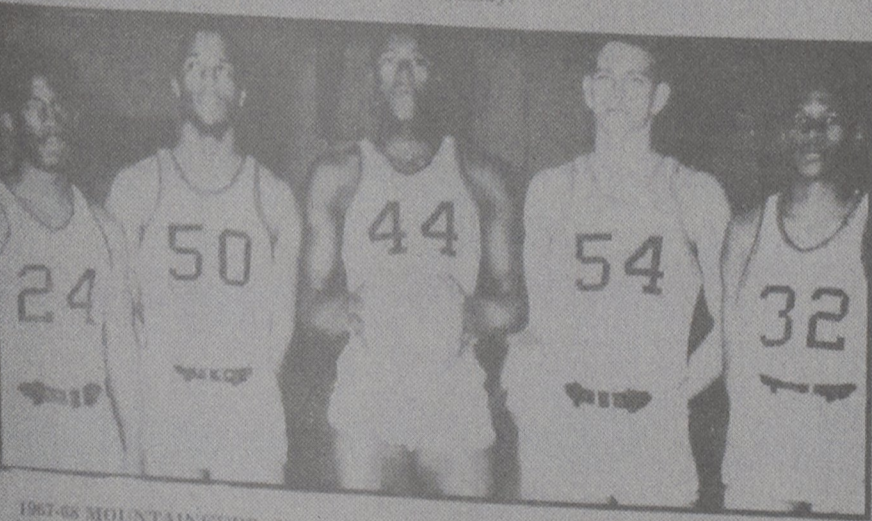
GEORGE ADAMS
...KMHS Superstar



GEORGE ADAMS
...G-W All-American



GEORGE ADAMS
...San Diego Q Star



1967-68 MOUNTAINERS - Here's the starting five for the 1967-68 KMHS basketball team which won 25 straight games before bowing to Kannapolis 63-53 in state championship game. Left to right, Steve Spencer, Ken Mitchem, George Adams, Rick Finger and Otis Cole.

Those who saw him dominate the game of basketball at Kings Mountain High and Gardner Webb College will find it hard to believe that George Adams failed to make the first basketball team he tried out for.

But that's exactly what happened to Adams as an eighth grader at Compact High School in 1963.

"Bill Huger was the coach," recalled Adams, now recreation director for the City of Kings Mountain. "But John Blalock, the varsity coach, told me that he recognized that I had some ability and that he wanted me to be a part of his team. So I was Coach Blalock's trainer."

Midway through the season, Blalock had an extra uniform and placed Adams on the varsity team. He ended up sharing a starting position with his older brother, Thomas.

That part of Adams' basketball career has been known by only a few. But the rest of his story is familiar to almost everyone in Kings Mountain and Cleveland County. The 6-5 standout went on to become the first black superstar athlete at Kings Mountain High, was a three-time All-American at Gardner-Webb College and played four years with the San Diego Conquistadors in the ABA.

"Playing basketball was always my dream," says Adams, who was raised by his aunts after his mother died when Adams was small. "I would watch the Harlem Globetrotters and the good college teams on television and wish that I could play with those guys someday."

Adams says the integration of Compact and KMHS was the key to his success in basketball because he was able to play for a coach (Bob Hussey) who recognized his talent and gave him a chance to display it, and that by playing at KMHS he was able to receive publicity that helped him catch the eye of college coaches.

"Believe me," says Adams, "there were a lot of outstanding basketball players at Compact who never got a chance to prove themselves because of the timing. I was lucky."

Adams averaged over 23 points per game in two seasons at KMHS and led the Mountaineers to a 45-2 record. He scored 664 points his senior season as the Mountaineers went 25-1 and lost to Kannapolis 63-58 in the state championship game. He averaged 25.5 points and 20 rebounds his senior year despite the fact that the starters often sat out half the game after going in and building up huge leads.

"One of the biggest disappointments I've ever had was when we lost to Kannapolis in a game that we should have won," says Adams. "We had a very good high school team and people like Ken Mitchem and Steve Spencer deserved a lot more credit than they got."

Adams credits Blalock, who coached him in the eighth through 10th grades at Compact, and Hussey, who coached him his senior year at KMHS, for putting some organization into his game.

"A lot of people can go out and run and shoot, and that's basically the type player I was," said Adams. "But they recognized that I had some talent and placed me in a position where I could be effective."

Adams rewrote the KMHS record books in just two short years. In addition to a 25.5 scoring average his senior season, he also averaged over 20 rebounds per game and blocked almost any shot an opponent put up anywhere around him. The only time he was held to under double figures was in his junior year when York, S.C., went into a deep freeze at the KMHS gym. The halftime score was 4-2 and KMHS ended up winning 22-13. Adams scored nine points. His single game high was 38 points in a 72-59 win over Shelby.

(ED. NOTE - George Adams is one of four Kings Mountain men to be inducted into the Chamber of Commerce Sports Hall of Fame at its initial banquet on Mon., Apr. 11 at 7 p.m. at the community center. Other honorees include the late Jake Early, Kevin Mack and John Henry Moss. Tickets are \$10 each and may be purchased at McGinnis Department Store, First Federal Savings and Loan, Goforth Plumbing, Kings Mountain High School, the Chamber of Commerce, Kings Mountain Herald and from any member of the Hall of Fame committee.)



GEORGE AND FAMILY
...Wife Andrea, right,
daughters Carmin, seated,
and Jocelynn, behind
(Not pictured, son Brian)

During his two years at KMHS, Adams was team MVP both years, All-State twice, All-American once, and MVP in the Marion Civitan Classic All-Star Game. He scored 18 points in the prestigious East-West High School All-Star game in Greensboro.

His abilities drew raves from college coaches and he was recruited by almost every major college in the country, including top-ranked Houston. Many people couldn't understand why he chose small Gardner-Webb College in nearby Boiling Springs, but to Adams it was the only choice.

"I've always loved Kings Mountain and my family always came first," said Adams. "By playing at Gardner-Webb I could play in a good program and under a good coach (Eddie Holbrook) and I was just a few minutes away if I were needed at home."

His freshman year at G-W, the school was making the transition from junior to senior college. He averaged 18 points on a team that included All-Americans Artis Gilmore, now of the Boston Celtics, and Ernie Fleming.

After Adams' freshman year, Fleming and Gilmore, who were a year older, decided to transfer to Jacksonville and Dolphins' coach Joe Williams wanted Adams to come with them. But Adams elected to stay at G-W.

"During my four years at Gardner-Webb, I could have transferred to just about anywhere in the nation," he recalled. "But Coach Holbrook and I talked about it, and I don't think I could have gone anywhere else and gotten the recognition I did at Gardner-Webb. I couldn't have gone to Jacksonville and averaged 33 points and 15 rebounds a game."

Adams made All-American his sophomore, junior and senior years at G-W and played in three NAIA national tournaments. He still holds 15 school records, including most career points (2,404) and most career rebounds (1,113).

Adams once scored 57 points in a single game and had a 26-rebound game. He averaged hitting 64.2 percent of his shots over a four-year career.

Although the Bulldogs never won an NAIA national championship, they played for third place twice in three years during the Adams' era and finished third once.

"We lost to people like Stephen F. Austin and Eau Claire State, who had excellent records for a number of years in the NAIA, and they always finished first, second or third," Adams recalled. "We were establishing our program and it made us feel good to play the same calibre of basketball that they played."

Adams says he's proud of his G-W scoring and rebounding records but the fondest memories he holds of his four-year career there are the moments with Coach Holbrook.

"Holbrook was an exceptional basketball coach," says Adams, "and all of his players are successful. I've always said the biggest asset for me was the place I went to college a the man I played for. I would like to think that I had good ability, but I don't feel like I would have reached the level of success that I did had it not been for Eddie Holbrook. He was the key in my whole career."

Adams was drafted in the second round of the NBA draft by the world champion

Milwaukee Bucks, and made it all the way through the Bucks' exhibition season before being the last player cut.

"You know, being a pro player had always been my dream and when I signed on with Milwaukee I found myself playing with the man, Kareem Abdul Jabbar, who had been my idol when he was at UCLA," Adams said.

After being released by the Bucks, Adams was contacted by San Diego coach K.C. Jones, who had seen him play in the NAIA national tourney in Kansas City, and he signed with the Conquistadors. He averaged 12 points and four rebounds a game during his four-year ABA career and played one year under Wilt Chamberlain.

Just like the timing had been off a tad years earlier for other great Compact athletes, Adams' pro basketball timing was off just a little because his career ended just before the multi-million dollar packages became available to players.

"I didn't quite get the chance to make a lot of money," he said, "but for me the experience was the greatest thing. If it were not for basketball, I would never had been able to travel to the places I saw or meet the kind of people I came in contact with. I made friends with people that I still talk to almost daily, like Artis Gilmore and Caldwell Jones, who are still active players. My roommate my first year was Jimmy O'Brian. He's now the head coach at Boston College. Tim Bassett was a good friend and he's now coaching at New Jersey, and Dwight Lamar is working in parks and recreation in Louisiana. We all would like to say we made a lot of money, but for me the experiences I had were of much more value."

Looking back on his career, Adams said he had only one major disappointment and that was when he was selected to try out for the 1972 U.S. Olympic team in Colorado. He was doing well and was one of the leading candidates for the team when he suffered an injury and had to come back to Kings Mountain.

"If I had made the Olympic team, that would have been the single most important thing I'd ever accomplished," he said. "But, things like that happen. I'm glad I had the opportunity."

After the ABA folded in 1975, Adams considered trying out for the NBA but decided to return home and complete his education at Gardner-Webb.

"With the ABA folding I knew the position I was playing (strong forward) was in jeopardy," Adams said. "I was 6-5 and strong forwards in the NBA were 6-10 and 7-feet. I knew it was going to be difficult to continue playing and being successful at it so I decided to come back and finish my college work at Gardner-Webb."

Adams earned his B.S. in parks and recreation on May 15, 1977, and started to work for the city of Kings Mountain on a part-time basis on June 16, 1977. He worked part-time for about three months and then was added on full-time.

Adams has seen the recreation program here grow to include activities for several hundred youth and older persons and he feels it has the potential to be even better.

"It's been a personal satisfaction for me for 10 years," he said. "It's rewarding but sometimes I miss basketball. It's hard to turn your back on the thing that has made you. I think maybe someday I might try to pursue a coaching career."

Adams said his wife, the former Andrea Maddox from Shelby, has always been his encourager during his down moments, and he said he's thankful to all of his friends and neighbors in Kings Mountain who supported him throughout his career.

"Kings Mountain has been home to me all my life," he said. "I love the town and the people. As far as I'm concerned, being selected to the Kings Mountain Hall of Fame is the best, most prestigious honor that I've ever achieved because it's coming from the people of Kings Mountain. In accepting it, I'll accept it on behalf of all the people who really deserve the credit, and that's the ones who coached me, motivated me, supported and encouraged me."



GEORGE SIGNS WITH G-W
...G-W Coach Eddie Holbrook, left,
KMHS Coach Bobby Hussey look on

March 23, 1988

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