Scholastic Sports Scene

Can Dunbar, Walbrook cagers avoid defeat?

By Martin Evans
AFRO Staff Writer

The two best basketball teams in the city have both gotten out of the season's starting blocks fast, and with the season a scant two weeks old these two jaugger-nauts seem to have hit an unbreakable stride.

In fact the opinion that the two, the Dunbar boys and the Walbrook girls varsities are virtually unbeatable seems to have gained credibility in the city's basketball circles.

Still the question must be asked. Can either of these two teams be beaten this year?

The answer is a definite yes.

Dunbar blew by the local competition in the Poet-Laker Tipoff which opened the season two weekends ago. And they hardly slowed down while marching through DeMatha of Washington, D.C., the number two ranked team in the nation during last weekend's Beltway Classic at Towson State.

Dunbar has not lost since the early months of 1981.

Walbrook is on a roll also. The Warriors demolished almost all who dared to come onto the same court with them last year, falling but a single time.

Towson Catholic, the only team to beat them last year has searched high and low and has traveled to as far away as Ireland to find top competition. But TC will not play Walbrook.

TC coach Gus Grayson said he will not schedule the Warriors because the Walbrook players posess qualities "that do not make sport a positive experience."

But some say the reason for Grayson's snub is the talent that the Warriors posess.

In any event despite the early success of these two teams their season cannot be seen as assured. New wrinkles always seem to present themselves. A team's fortunes can turn as quickly as can a tender ankle.

Poet coach Bob Wade will be the first to admit he takes nothing for granted when facing competition.

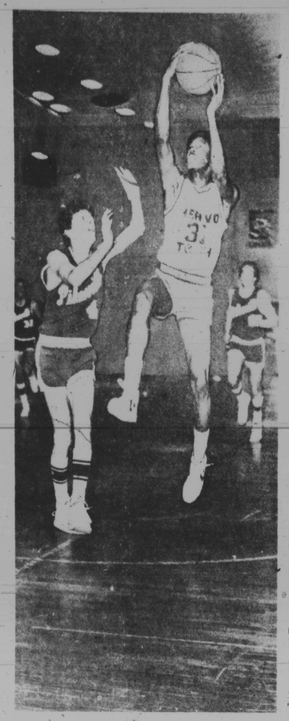
Wade said his Poets are scheduled for several road tournaments which could Pit them against teams from as far away as Florida, and which will require them to play games after extended travel and overnight stays in unfamiliar settings.

"Traveling can be rough. You're not accustomed to the bed you have to sleep in, you eat different food, your Mom is not around," Wade said.

Both the Warriors and the Poets are strong enough to beat any team theyar are scheduled to play this year. On paper, that is.

But But the game is played on a hardwood floor. In front of screaming fans. Often with lunch lying undigested in one's gut.

It is factors like these which may decide whether Baltimore's best scholastic teams will sail through the season without a loss.



MERVO POKES PIKESVILLE — The Mustangs combined strong rebounding and a trapping defense Tuesday afternoon, setting up numerous fast break opportunities and coasting to a 98- 53 victory over visiting Pikesville. Lewis Benson scores on a breakaway layup.

Mervo tussles toward championship

The Mervo wrestling coach cast a whistfull glance at the athletes which scattered themselves about the humid wrestling room in squirming pairs, struggling to pin each other to the mat.

Elmer Dize, a long time wrestling buff, then shook his head slowly.

The Mustangs are the defending MSA and public school wrestling champions, and have been competitive in recent years.

But the expression on Dize's face reflected a concern for the future of wrestling at Mervo. Hard times are to come, he said.

"Without a junior varsity program the end is in sight," Dize said sadly. "You see these little guys? They won't get a chance to wrestle anyone (competitively) all year," Dize said, gesturing toward several of the less experienced athletes.

The Board of Education eliminated the junior varsity wrestling program in city schools three years ago, a move designed to save money.

The result, Dize said, has been a drastic reduction in the experience level attainable by wrestlers coming through the public schools' wrestling program. The impact is beginning to be felt in his program.

"Once this group of seniors goes . . . ," Dize said, his voice trailing off. "But everyone is in the same boat, so I'm not complaining exept for the good of the sport."

The Mustangs were the class of the city's public school wrestling program last year, posting an undefeated season. They beat Southwestern by three points to win the B conference championship, and also won the MSA tournament.

Mervo has gotten off to a good start again this year. They beat St. Paul, an A conference school, 35-27 earlier this month.

And Wednesday they traveled to Southern to take a convincing victory, pinning eight of 12 opponents, and losing only three bouts.

But in spite of Mervo's early success Dize said he is not ready to appraise his team's chances for this year.

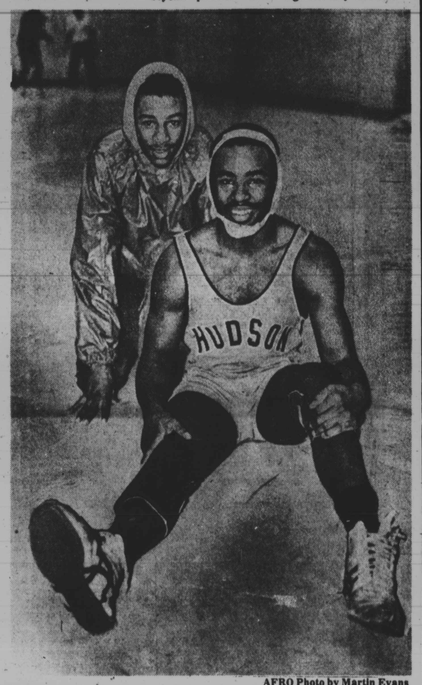
"There are so many question marks," Dize said, appraising his new squad. "You usually count the number of wins you have returning. By those standards we are only fair. We graduated six wrestlers last year. Five were (MSA) champions and one took second place."

Mervo will depend on several seniors, including Kevin Smith, Willie Brown, Darryl Rice, and Darren Parham to provide leadership for the Mustangs. And wins.

Mervo also will depend on enthusiasm. Many of the athletes stayed well beyond practice time, working on moves, tumbling playfully, and doing extra calisthenics.

Darren Parham, who stayed to wrestle a little longer, said it is love for the sport which keeps him so closely involved. He compared the sport to a chess match.

"You are always thinking about moves," Parham said. "If a guy has you down you have to figure a way out of it."



LAST OF A DYING BREED? Mervo has been a wrestling power in recent years but the elimination of the junior varsity wrestling programs from city schools threatens to weaken varsity programs city wide. Darren Parham and Willie Brown (rear) are two of the Mustangs' best grapplers in the 154 and 134 pound class, respectively.

AFRO Photo by Martin Evans

N.Y. tournament a Laker plus

"This team is a lot smaller than teams I have had in the past. I'm not really sure what I can expect from them this year," Woodrow Williams, the boys Varsity basketball coach at Lake Clifton High School said of his team earlier this Year.

The 1982-83 version of the Lakers indeed smaller than last year's edition, with the most noticeable reduction resulting from the graduation of Melvin Mathis.

Mathis' 6'-10" height and hefty bulk, matched with a feathery jumper made him one of the most respected forwards in the city last year and he will be missed.

But the Lakers also lost a lot of experience with last year's graduating class. Only three Players with significent varsity experience returned from the city's number two team of last year.

Faced with the dual task of developing game strategies to complement his players' skills and orienting the Players to his new quick team tactics, Williams scheduled several early season tournaments for the Lakers.

The easy going coach said he figures the tournaments will help the Lakers get into mid-season form quicker.

"This is the first time in a long time we have had so many tournaments," Williams said. "We will play more than we ever have for the express purpose of gaining experience."

Lake Clifton has scheduled itself for December games for tournaments in Washington, D.C., Brooklyn, N.Y., and Aberdeen, Md. in addition to the recent Poet-Laker tournament Tipoff and their regular league contests.

Tournament play offers an added bonus to scholastic programs. Baltimore public schools are limited to 18 "games" per season, a rule designed to prevent the scheduling of contests at the expense of students' academic achievement.

But a tournament is counted as a single game, even it it involves a team in several contests in the climb toward a championship.

"A team can get the experience of several games for the price of one," Williams said with a smile. "Someone was thinking when they made that rule."

The Lakers traveled to Brooklyn, N.Y. for a tournament last weekend and enjoyed good success. They ran to a 76-56 win over Holy Cross High in the opener, and controlled the ball in a defensive match with Nazerith, winning 44-32 for the tournament title.

I think we were the class of the tournament but they were good schools," Williams said. "The first night we were able to do what we wanted, but the second game we had to be more deliberate, to play a more controlled game."

In addition to providing more games, road tournaments expose scholastic athletes to different talent and coaching styles, and to the experience of playing under unfamiliar conditions.

"It is always a good to get on the road because the crowd is different, the officials are different. You can't always be in your own back yard. You have to go out and face the world," Williams said, waxing philosophically. "In that sense sport is a microcosm of the life."

Tournaments can also provide a big game atmosphere and expose players to pressure and excitement without affecting their league standings. Developing players are frequently surprised by their ability to cope with difficult situations, and often gain maturity quickly.

Williams said his players seemed to have gained a new sense of poise after the Brooklyn trip.

"I can't pick out any one player but I can sense a change in the team's attitude," Williams said. "I was commenting to coach Moore yesterday in practice that we had a whole different outlook. We went away and were successful and the players had a different outlook toward one another. The players realized they have to depend on one another."

Strode out

Charles Strode of New York, was eliminated in the second round of the Australian Open tennis tournament Monday in Melbourne.

Strode lost, 6-3, 7-5, 6-4, to homebred Wayne Madur.

Meadowlark Lemon's basketball entourage escapes crash injuries

BOISE, IDAHO (UPI) — A van carrying eight members of Meadowlark Lemon's touring basketball company skidded on icy pavement and rolled on Interstate 84 Monday morning as the players traveled from Boise to an evening engagement in Moscow.

None of the players traveling in the van was seriously hurt, according to a team spokesman.

Lemon was traveling in a separate vehicle and was not involved in the accident, which occurred at about 11 a.m., according to Joe Albanese, manager of the California Coasters, a team that has accompanied Lemon's Bucketeers on its tour of several northwest. Initial reports indicated Lemon, a former Harlem globetrotter, was in the vehicle as it traveled west on the freeway about 17 miles west of Ontario, Ore.

Lemon and his team played a benefit game Sunday in Boise against the Coasters

Idaho State Police Trooper Fred Becker said the 1981 van skidded out of control when it hit a patch of ice.

Albanese, contacted at Holy Rosary Hospital in Ontario, said four of the basketball players had been treated for minor injuries and released.

Becker said the van, driven by Stanely Bunton, 17, of Louisville, KY., sustained about $3,000 damage in the accident.

Meadowlark Lemon escapes Idaho accident

Alanese said the van, which had earlier been filled with 50 gallons of gasoline, started to smoke as it came to rest on its top and the players had to kick out a window to escape the vehicle.

Albanese said Lemon continued traveling to Moscow for a benefit game against a team that was to be assembled there. None of the members of Lemon's Bucketeers team was traveling in the wrecked van, which was carrying Coasters players, he said.

A mural done by the great Mexican painter Diego Rivera for Rockefeller Center was destroyed by order of its sponsers because Rivera included a portrait of Lenin. The mural was reproduced in Mexico City at the Palace of Fine Arts.

College scores

BASKETBALL

Morgan 72, Bowie St. 56
Coppin St. 83, Cheyney St. 77 (2 OT)
Va. Union 66, UDC 64
Delaware St. 106, Bowie St. 71 (women)
NC - Asheville 81, Knoxville 66
Alcorn 67, Fla. A - M 65
Ala. State 135, SC State 113
Ark - Pine Bluff 82, Hendrix 65
Houston Bapt. 62, Pr. View 45
S.E. Louisiana 69, Southern 64

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