ALUMNI

Oakley: NBA's physical, 'but that's my game'

By DAVID BULLA Review Staff Writer

hibition game last month.

Michael Jordan, sitting in a folding 1964-65. chair in the middle of the locker room, nearest the door.

elder Jordan said. "I hear you're big al. Yet, Oakley was the first Division II and aggressive."

Mr. Jordan smiled broadly and ex- Year in that state. tended his right hand. Oakley smiled too, shook James Jordan's hands and quietly finished dressing.

The 6-foot-91/2, 243-pound Oakley is used to working -- excelling -- in anonymity. Although Oakley was the NCAA Division II Player of the Year last season, Michael Jordan had admitted in July that he knew very little should make him stand out in the Naabout the newest Bull, who came to tional Basketball Association, for the Chicago in a draft-day trade that sent Cleveland native is a rare breed. Unlike

rebounds). That's a rare feat. The last time somebody led the glamorous Atlantic Coast Conference in both James Jordan, father of superstar scoring and rebounding was 1978-79, Michael, walked into the Chicago when Wake Forest's Rod Griffin Bulls' locker room at the Greensboro averaged 21.5 points and 10 rebounds. (N.C.) Coliseum after a preseason ex- Before that, it had been North Carolina's Billy Cunningham in

But it's always been difficult for was surrounded by a horde of media CIAA stars to earn much respect, even people and few of them noticed his at home. Look at all the great players father's entrance. Sensing his who have played at CIAA schools in anonymity, James Jordan walked over Virginia -- Bob Dandridge, Mike to shake hands with rookie Charles Davis, Ricky Mahorn, James "Hook Oakley, who was dressing at the locker Shoot" Grant, Richard "Pop" Pitts, Charles Bonaparte, Richard "Pee "You must be the new guy," the Wee" Kirkland, Gene Cunningham, et performer to be named Player of the

But Oakley's not worried about this

"Not being well known might help me some in the NBA," Oakley said. "I gotta do my thing. People will either sit up and take note or they won't."

Oakley's aggressive playing style Keith Lee to the Cleveland Cavaliers. most NBA players, he measures his It's hard to believe that the younger success in rebounds and floor burns. Jordan, very proud of his general Stated another way, Oakley is as agbasketball knowledge, would know lit- gressive and blue-collar as Michael



tle about Oakley, a man who played his college basketball at Richmond-based Virginia Union. Especially when you consider how dominant a player Oakley was in the Central Interpoints per game) and rebounding (17 Greensboro exhibition, has been play- minutes of an exhibition game against vin. Greenwood is in his seventh season

Jordan is graceful and white-collar.

While Jordan was the NBA Rookie of the Year last season, don't expect a Bull to win that award this season.



Above, Oakley muscles for position in last year's CIAA Tournament. Below, he waits his turn in the NBA with the Bulls, flanked by superstar Michael Jordan (photos by James Parker).

season. The Bulls want it that way for Va. the time being. They plan to bring their minutes per game. His best scoring needs a player like him." night came in a 118-100 loss at Seattle Nov. 2, when he totaled 15 points.

he's been run-down," Albeck said out of Nevada-Las Vegas. after last month's Greensboro exhibi- One move that should help Oakley tion. It came the night after Oakley get increased time was the trading of collegiate Athletic Association. Last If you're a box score reader, you'll had grabbed 10 rebounds, scored nine 6-91/2, 220-pound David Greenwood to season, he led the CIAA in scoring (24 notice Oakley, who didn't play in the points and handed out five assists in 18 the San Antonio Spurs for George Ger-

ing the role of a reserve early in the the Washington Bullets in Hampton,

"He's been running in concrete, so new power forward along slowly. At to speak." Albeck added. "But he's press time, he had averaged 6.7 re- gonna be OK. He's a physical player bounds and 5.8 points while playing 16 and a good rebounder. Every club

Still, Oakley's destined to play behind 6-9, 210-pound Sidney Green "I didn't play him today because this season. Green is in his third season

the Greensboro exhibition, which came without flinching."

points per game in his career, saw his game come to life in the playoffs against Milwaukee. He continued that improvement in the preseason. And Oakley's presence had a lot to do with

"I have no doubt in my mind Sid has and technical training to get the in the Navy. With all the decision-tions and increases. never worked this hard."

Albeck does, however, see Oakley playing more as the season progresses, ing ability, but that he must learn not to force the flashy pass all the time.

Oakley believes the leap forward from Division II to the NBA will not be that big of an adjustment.

"The NBA is a lot more physical, but that's my game," Oakley said. "There is also a lot more running than in college. Maybe that's why I'm a little a rundown. These guys are good, but I'm not going to say they're a lot better than me."

Virginia Union Coach Dave Robbins said he could begin to see Oakley was going to be an NBA player before his junior season.

"At that time I thought he would go in the third, fourth or fifth round," Robbins said. "After his junior year, I thought he was second-round material. When it came draft time, I thought he would go in the first round between the 12th and 17th selection. He just kept getting better all the time."

That's the way people have always seen Oakley.

Asked what he had learned about Oakley in preseason, Jordan, who led the Bulls in rebounding last season, said: "I respect his rebounding Oh,

On black ADs

• There are very few black men who serve as athletic directors at predominantly white colleges. One used to be Gale Sayers, but he moved from Southern Illinois to historically black Tennessee State last month.

One black man who does serve as AD at a majority university is 34-yearold Charles S. Harris, hired by Arizona State in May. Harris went to the Tempe, Ariz., school with lofty credentials. He had served as AD at Penn from 1979-85.

But Jordan isn't awed by Oakley's

and was being shopped at the time of yes, and his ability to take the charge most rebounds (only applicable if come in handy as a bodyguard one Oakley plays more than 20 minutes). day.

Despite Jordan's competitive nature, That also explained why Oakley didn't rebounding. Indeed, the guard has of- he may be wise to let Oakley win more pect Oakley to be on the court. He'll fered the power forward a game-by- than few of those bets. As much atten- throw his body around on the inside Green, who has only averaged 5.7 game \$10 wager on who would get the tion as Jordan gets, Oakley might and give Jordan freedom to operate.

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And that's exactly what the Bulls ex-

made Sid a better player," Jerry You're the man in charge. And you dollars worth of sophisticated A solid starting salary of \$17,700, Krause, the Bulls' vice president of ___can handle it. Because the Navy equipment. and up to as much as \$31,000 in operations, told the Chicago Tribune. has given you the management. At age 22 you can be a leader four years with regular promo-

what you do includes the care responsibility. and responsibility for millions of The rewards match up, too.

Thirty men report to you. And to help you match up to your

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ment. For example, the Bull coach said he was impressed with Oakley's pass-

