## Pritchett makes no excuses for keeping it in the family

By RANDY PETTITT **Review Staff Writer** 

With two sons in the starting lineup, you would figure Coach Robert Pritchett of Clark College would have a lot of day." explaining to do.

But Pritchett is a man who believes that actions speak louder than words and summation and has left the performances of his two sons -- senior point guard Robert Pritchett, Jr. and sophomore shooting guard, Elgin Pritchett -- to speak for themselves.

The two quickly came to their father's rescue by doing their talking on the court. Robert is averaging 14.4 rough," said Elgin, points a game and dishing out a teamhigh 7.4 assists, while younger brother recruited as one of Elgin is good for another 14.1 points a the best high game and is the Panthers' best three-point shooter, canning 44% beyond the stripe.

If those numbers are still not enough gia. to silence the doubting Thomases, then Pritchett can point to the Panthers spotless 10-0 record.

So what, there are still a dozen NCAA teams undefeated you might

Well how many of them have lost the leading scorer in the nation and start only two seniors?

The argument is good enough to convince most folks in the Southern Intercol-

legiate Athletic Conference, where Clark is expected to battle Alabama A&M and Paine College for conference

Though an occasional nasty remark still drifts down from the top of an arena or two, Pritchett says the novelty has worn off and his sons are quickly silencing the

know there's going to always be some skepticism," said Pritchett, who is the only college coach in the United States to have two sons in the starting lineup.

unique situation and Clark College shooting guard Elgin years. my sons realize that," Pritchett (photo by Craig T. Greenhe said. "But really, lee). I'm harder on them

than anyone else. The other kids don't have to ride home with me when we lose.

"Being the coach's son is not the easiest thing in the world to do. They not

only have to listen to the kidding from their friends, but they also have to

Elgin agreed with his father's said being the coach's kid made things very difficult upon his arrival at Clark.

"I had it pretty who was heavily school guards in the state of Geor-

already here for two years and had proved to everyone people really Greenlee). raised their eye-

brows when I came in and started my

"I didn't worry about it, though.

That meant the most to me -- the respect of my teammates.

"Most of them

"We have better balance as a team and we're operating as a unit. If one guy has a bad night, then we have someone

there to pick up the

chances," said Pritchett, who holds a 183years at Clark.

"We have a little more to throw at folks this year," he said.

who is good for 15.6 points a game and is a ball alcoholic." solid rebounder. The ures, with Robert's the country." 14.4 average and Elgin's 14.1 figure. Ikeobi anchors the center position with

his 6-10 frame and 11.9 points a game.

Tracy Murray, the team's only freshman starter, is at the big forward spot and carries a 11.9 aver-

"A lot of times we would stand around and wait for Ernest to make things happen," confessed Pritchett of "He was that great of

"Now, we have five guys that can make things happen. Robert is the guy that makes this team go, though.

"He has the job of bringing it up the floor and distributing basketball. When we played Morehouse earlier this year they put two men on Robert to wear him down.

"So I put Elgin shooting guard. lee). Elgin just picked their defense apart for 27 points and we

won pretty easily. "That's the advantage we have this

at the point and Clark College point guard Robert switched Robert to Pritchett Jr. (photo by Craig T. Green-

live with the fans."

At Clark College, though, you might have to live with the coach - especially year -- versatility. I can switch guys if your name is Elgin or Robert.

around and still get results."

For many college-bound high school seniors, the idea of going off to school centers around getting away from the "We feel pretty trappings of being a teenager -- like good about our mowing the lawn, taking out the trash and babysitting your little sister.

But Robert and Elgin's trip to college 94 record in nine has meant getting to know their dad a lit-

> "He has a whole different personality as a coach," said Robert of his dad.

"He'll really get on you for messing up and then tell a joke or something to offer the team's lead- get your spirits up. He is a great coach ing scorer, 6-5 for- and father, but he doesn't mind embarward James Martin, rassing you if he has to."

Elgin described his dad as a "basket-

"He knows the game very well," said Pritchett brothers are Elgin. "He also knows us very well. I'm next on the list of five sure since he raised us, that he can get players in double fig- more out of us than any other coach in

Pritchett said the dividends of having two brothers in the lineup are starting

"You can see more of their brotherly camaraderie come into play," he said.

"Now they are doing things that you can't coach. In just two years they are starting to come together like guys that have been playing college ball with each

other for four years. comes down to the end of a game, we'll have a little edge. These guys know each other very

Like brothers?

"Yes, you could say that," Pritchett laughed. "And I treat them like my own sons," he jokingly added.

At Clark College, they've managed to keep a winning tradition in the family, but there will always be those

"These kids have won the respect of their teammates," said

"If you do that, you've won the war. cess to his offseason training regimen. After You don't have to practice with and works out daily with other pros.

Before to Burkett's rookie season, Buster Barnett and Ben Williams, his former Bi teammates, and former New Orleans Saints tight end Larry Hardy took him to the banks 29 catches for first downs.

"A lot of people thought I would be of the Pearl River, where they ran hills and ran drafted in the fifth or sixth round or not at all," in the sand.

Burkett: Not well known now, but he's going to be

"I figured if I got cut it wouldn't be because I wasn't in shape," said Burkett. "It would have

Burkett had modest success as a rookie among the longest in team history, and he had

His per-catch crage slipped to 13.7 yards in 1987 as the Bills went to a control

Burkett is quick to give Buffalo quarterback Jim Kelly credit for his emergence as a

"You talk about helping a receiver. A lot of did. Burkett had 49 catches after 10 games. receivers have to jump and reach. With him

On the other hand, Burkett helps Kelly. At 6-4, he has the speed to get deep, and at his was dead. size, doesn't mind going over the middle.

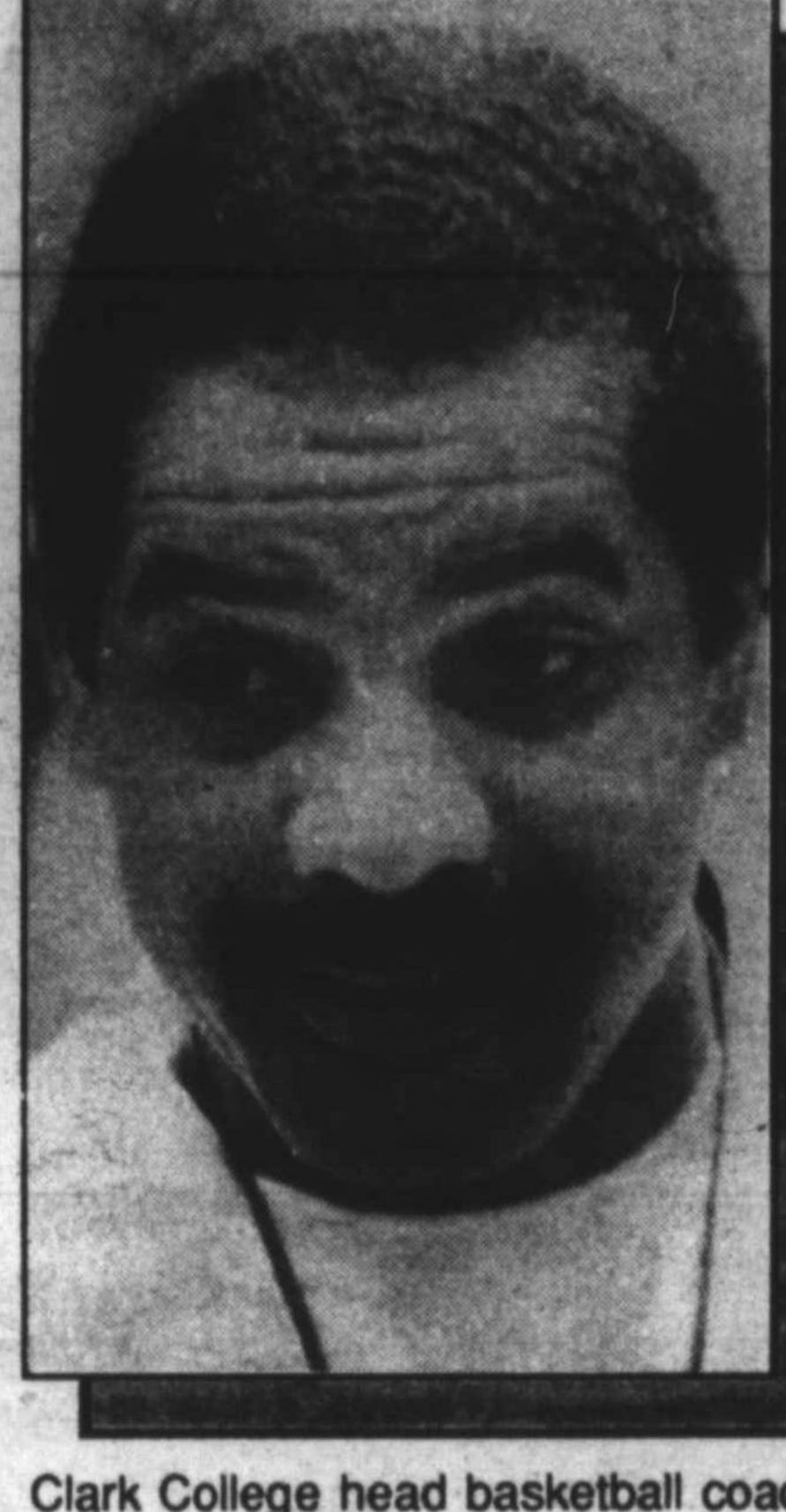
"If you don't like coming across the middle, you don't need to call yourself a receiver. You're a front-runner."

Burkett's success this year caught a lot of people off guard, even himself. He came to camp just hoping to start and be productive. He ended the season on the verge of stardom.

He had 10 receptions in the two games before the strike. It took him a while to "He can throw the ball," said Burkett. regroup after the replacement games, but he However, Kelly slumped in the final five games and Burkett had just seven receptions. Any chance he had of making the Pro Bowl

> Still, Burkett is positive about the season and the future and so are the Bills.

"In due time everyone is going to know who Chris Burkett is," said Kelly.



that he could play. Clark College head basketball coach Nigerian Anthony But I think a lot of Robert Pritchett Sr. (photo by Craig T.

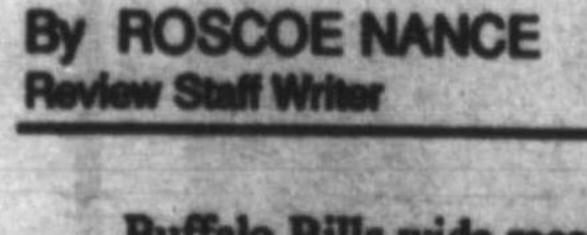
just worked hard and proved to my age. teammates that I deserved to play.

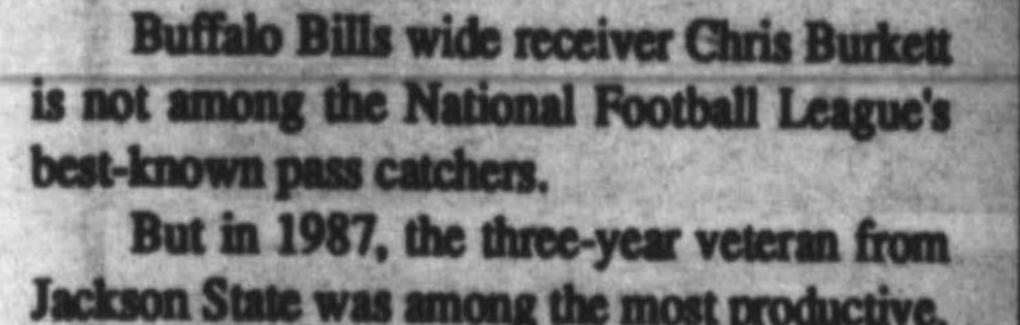
The Panthers year before dropping a 102-90 deciagain despite losing

a blazing start and for three straight

we have a better team than we did

last year," said Robert.





Jackson State was among the most productive. He was No. 4 in the APC with 56 catches for 765 yards and four touchdowns and was a major reason the Bills contended for the playoffs. If was by far his best pro season, but

Burkett isn't close to being satisfied with his "I think I have accomplished a lot," he said. "But I still have a long way to go. I feel I can get better. I am not content with where I

am. I'm playing well, but there are a lot of

things I want to do." No. 1 among the things Burkett wants to do is get into the playoffs and go on to the Super Bowl. No. 2 is making the Pro Bowl. If the Bills had achieved the former this season, Burkett might have accomplished the latter. Many think he should have anyway. But Burkett understands the politics of being selected to the Pro Bowl. First priority goes to players who have been selected before. Next come players who have

bad big years for playoff teams. "The Pro Bowl doesn't determine if you're at your peak," he said. "If you compare me with (the New York Jets' Al) Toon and (the Seattle Seahawks' Steve) Largent, they'll take one of them. For me to go, I'll have to catch 65 or 70 passes and score 10 or 12 touch-

When Burkett came into the NFL, making the Pro Bowl was not among even his most remote thoughts. He simply wanted to make the team. Even though he was a secondround choice, the 42nd player chosen in the 1985 draft, many of the so-called experts

openly questioned whether he would make it. He caught 94 passes for 1,708 yards at Jackson State. The Tigers ran the Wishbone Burkett's first two seasons, and he spent most of his time blocking.

He exploded his senior season and earned invitations to the Blue-Gray and Senior Bowl all-star games.

he said. "Some people thought I couldn't play

Still, he had his detractors.

at all. When you hear that so much, it gets to you. I've proved them wrong. I've been here to be because the others were better than me, and for three years, and I'm not just here. I'm one I just couldn't believe anybody was better than receiver. of the factors. I'm productive. It's not just a me. That attitude paid off." Burkett says he owes much of his suc- on a bad Buffalo team. He had 21 catches but

averaged a gaudy 17.7 yards a catch, estabeach season, he returns to Jackson, where he lishing himself as a potential big-play man. In 1986, he was even better. He averaged 22.9 yards a catch, among the best in the league. His touchdown catches of 84 and 75 yards are

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