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'The Greek' is typical

Let's have a moment of silence for Jimmy "the Greek" Snyder.

His comments that blacks are bred to be superior athletes - among others - got him fired from his job as a pro football prognosticator for CBS TV. But what does firing the Greek prove? Better yet, what does it improve?

Nothing. Basically, he was a fall guy - and at $750,000 a well paid one - for the system.

Granted, his remarks were offensive, insulting and inaccurate. But so are countless other remarks made by television commentators.

How many times have we heard a commentator describe a basketball player as being "a talent" when he was talking about a white athlete? That adjective seems to be reserved for blacks.

Whenever you hear announcers talking about athletic ability, raw talent and physical specimens, don't bother to look at the screen. You can rest assured it is a black player.

It is the white players who are intelligent, heady, gutty, fundamentally sound and over- achievers.

When is the last time Magic Johnson made a smart play? If he throws a behind- the- back bounce pass because that was the only way he could make the play, it was sheer athletic instinct. If Larry Bird made that same pass, it would have been because of his court awareness.

We are constantly reminded of how Bird is always the first player on the court before a game, practicing his shooting. How his work ethic makes him the player he is.

What about Michael Jordan's work ethic? He doesn't just fall out of bed and score 30 points a night. Some work goes into what he does, too. But you would never know it by what is written and said about him.

Those stereotypes are just as offensive as anything Jimmy "the Greek" ever said. Black athletes work just as hard as their white counterparts. Danny Ainge has an abundance of athletic ability. He has to if he could play both basketball and baseball on the professional level.

But no one ever talks about his athleticism.

Announcers' description of athletes is nothing more than their perceptions. Jimmy "the Greek's" perception was blacks were bred to be superior athletes.

Other announcers' perceptions are natural athletes. It's the same song, just a different verse. It goes back to the myth that blacks are lazy and unwilling to work.

But no one is insulted when it's sung. No one loses his job. But that doesn't make it right.

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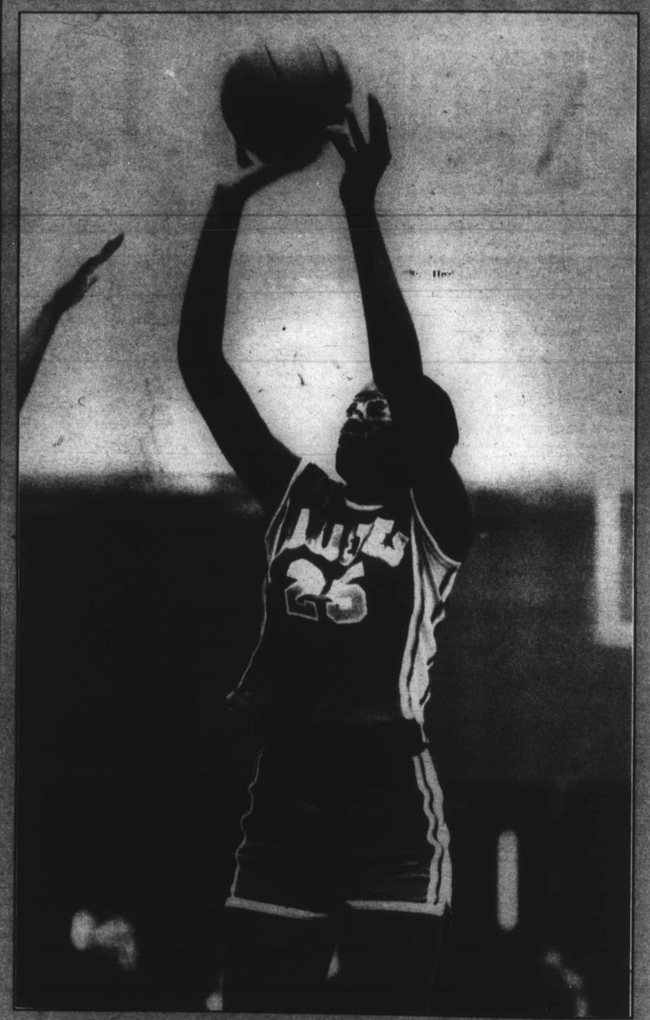

Tawauna Dixon fires away with her soft-touch jumper (photo by Craig T. Greenlee).

'TREE'
Dixon is Albany's foundation

By CRAIG T. GREENLEE
Review Staff Writer

Last season Albany State's Tawauna "Tree" Dixon exceeded all expectations as a freshman, averaging 19.8 points and 12.7 rebounds a game. She made the All-America team, finished third nationally in field goal percentage (.611) as the Rammettes recorded a 28-1 mark and won the SIAC title.

This season she's at it again. After 12 games her numbers are 21.4 ppg and 11.1 rpg. She's hitting 53 percent of her field goals and her ASC is 8-4.

At 6-2, Dixon has the size that coaches like in the pivot. She can score with the best of them and rules the boards with authority.

Size aside, there's much more to Dixon than a lanky frame. "She has a lot of coordination for a tall lady," says ASC women's coach John Davis. "And that's rare. With most tall ladies, you can count on them to score around the basket and grab some rebounds. But, with Dixon, you get more. She can play inside or outside and handles the ball well. I have no doubts that she can be trained to be a point guard. She's the nucleus for another championship team."

In 86-87, Dixon had the luxury of playing with two other All-America performers in the now departed Clemmie Smith at center and point guard Branda Candies. With those two around, Dixon was an unknown. She didn't have to shoulder the offensive load for ASC. She benefited and was allowed to mature gradually while becoming an instant factor in her team's success.

This year is quite different. Opponents shadow her every move. To say that teams gear their defenses to stop her is an understatement.

Double teams are common and she's seeing more triple teams whenever she enters the paint area.

Dixon's flowing style coincides with her low-key demeanor. At times it appears that on the court, things come so easy for her. But she's aware that she needs additional work to bring her game to a higher level.

"I'm not there yet," she says. "I can get better with my turnaround jumper and my hook shot." Dixon is also adamant about dunking, vowing that she'll come through with the slam one of these days. "I've come close," Dixon adds. "It always seems that at the last second I lose my grip on the ball. But I'm getting there."

When the Columbus, Ga., sophomore entered the college ranks, her only goal was to make the team. She had no idea that she would wind up starting.

"I felt that I would sit the bench a lot during my freshman year," Dixon says. "In practice I just tried to work hard all the time. It didn't really click in my mind that I was going up against All-America players in practice. But I kept telling myself that it wouldn't do me any good be scared. Since I really like playing the game, I decided that I needed to show people that I can play this game. It came down to either me playing or sitting on the bench. So I had to get better because it aggravates me to watch from the sidelines. The only time I don't mind coming out of a game is when I'm just too tired to go."

With the exception of playing for a national title, Dixon has already accomplished what many college players haven't achieved in a four-year career.

So what's left?

More All-America honors.

"I always wanted to make an All-America team," the computer science major says. "I used to look at all the basketball magazines and see people like Cherly Miller (Southern California). I wanted to see how it feels to be on top. I was really excited to be an All-America and now I want to make it four straight before I graduate."

While Dixon wasn't sure she would see much action as a freshman, coach Davis says. "With her and Clemmie Smith in the post, we had two trees to give us a strong inside game. For Tawauna, it was a fortunate situation."

Tree's versatility enables Davis to move her around when opponents stack their defenses in the pivot. Most often, she'll move to the wing and force people to come out from the basket by drilling soft touch jumpers from the perimeter.

Because teams are devoting more attention to Dixon, Davis works to get his star pivot lady to make the mental adjustments in dealing with the rough treatment that star players usually get.

"She only needs to play more to get better," coach Davis says. "My main goal with her is to motivate her to do as much off-season work as possible."

Given her freshman performance and current level of production, Dixon has a bright future in hoops even after her days as a Rammette are over.

The women's pro league in Europe is waiting. They were so impressed with her numbers that they would have taken her last year if she wasn't an underclassman.

The league loves pivot people. Size is a primary factor. Because she has good movement, a shooting touch, and ball handling skills, it won't be a surprise if that league courts Dixon heavily after her senior season.

SIAC opponents will be happy when that day comes.

'The Greek' is typical

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Firing Jimmy "the Greek" was nothing more than a grandstand play. CBS was saying it was outraged that one of its employees not only had such a racist attitude but also had the audacity to express it.

Canning "the Greek" was like prescribing aspirin for cancer. It doesn't help.

If CBS is really concerned about the message that goes out to its viewers, it should get messengers with a different perspective.

It should hire someone who understands that when a black athlete spends hour after hour playing sandlot basketball, it is equivalent to the time a white athlete might spend shooting alone in his backyard.

It should hire someone who can look at a Doug Williams and see that the only essential difference in him and John Elway is the latter had the luxury of playing on competitive teams early in his career.

Unless that happens, CBS - and all the other networks for that matter - may as well bring back "the Greek" because there is not a nickel's worth of difference between him and their other messengers.