

Recruiting horror stories getting worse every day

Now boosters are posing as sportswriters

Some holiday thoughts and notes...

□ **IT WAS VERY** disturbing to read recent newspaper reports that imposters or boosters claiming to be sportswriters have tried to discourage highly-recruited prep



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basketball star Shaun Golden and others from signing with particular schools.

A 6-foot-3 guard from Greer, S.C., Golden, however, resisted their efforts and signed with the University of Georgia during the early signing period last month. Clemson reportedly was his second choice.

The boosters' ploy was very unethical and this has gone too far. What is the world coming to?

This ugly recruiting affair strengthens my belief that Kentucky could have been set up in the Dwane Casey-Chris Mills-Emery fiasco.

□ **SPEAKING OF GOLDEN**, he was rated No. 24 in *Basketball Weekly's* Top 75 seniors and No. 25 in recruiting expert Bob Gibbons' Top 100. Last season as a junior, Golden averaged 28 points, eight rebounds and six assists.

As for the SEC, it appears LSU coach Dale Brown has landed the recruiting plum as he last month signed the nation's best big man from the class of 1989. Alabama, Tennessee and Mississippi State also inked prep standouts who were highly regarded by various publications.

LSU has 6-10, 230-pound center Shaquille O'Neal, whom Brown met a few years ago in Europe, where the player's father was stationed in the military. O'Neal (whose first name is pronounced Sha-keel) was ranked No. 5 by *Basketball Weekly*.

Since he had been attending school in Europe, O'Neal played his first prep season in the United States last winter, leading the city of San Antonio in blocked shots. He averaged 17.5 points, 13.5 rebounds and 6.0 blocked shots for San Antonio Cole High, which posted an impressive record of 32-1.

"He's such a young kid, every year he'll improve a lot," said his high school coach Dave MaJura, in *Basketball Weekly*. "He's nowhere near his peak. At 230 pounds, he has good strength, and he gets up and down the court well."

O'Neal is only 16 years old and his next birthday comes up in March.

James Robinson, a 6-2 guard from Jackson, Miss., is another heavily-recruited prepster. He signed with Alabama and was rated No. 11 or No. 12 in the nation, depending on which publication you're looking at. As a junior last season, Robinson averaged 28.2 points.

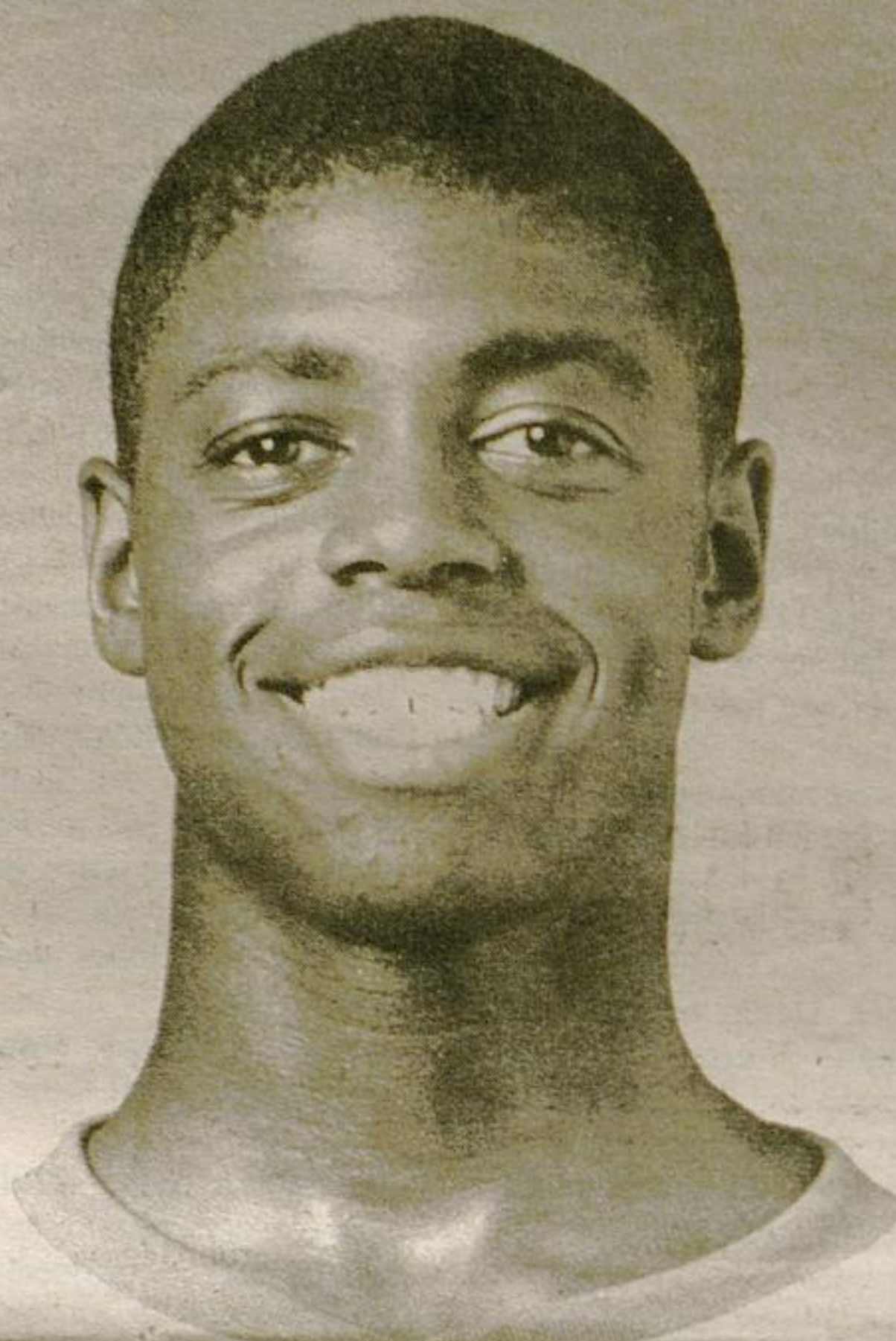
The Crimson Tide also landed another top recruit in 6-3 guard Marcus Jones, from Memphis, Tenn. Jones, who averaged 25.3 points last winter, was ranked No. 57 in *Basketball Weekly*.

Mississippi State signed 6-5 guard Brad Smith, rated No. 53 by Gibbons. Smith averaged 26.6 points and 8.0 rebounds last year.

Coach Don DeVoe of Tennessee signed five players, including 6-9, 220-pound forward/center Ronnie Robinson and 6-7, 235-pound forward Carlus Groves. Gibbons had Robinson No. 57 and Groves No. 91.

Of course, there were other youngsters who signed with the SEC schools during the early signing period in November, but the recruits mentioned above are the ones who have big reputations.

The SEC may have at least one more big-name recruit



Golden was the target of boosters posing as sportswriters.

in the fold next spring.

It is reported that 6-8, 205-pound forward Doug Edwards of Miami (Fla.) Senior is seriously considering Norm Sloan's program at Florida, along with Georgia Tech, North Carolina State, North Carolina, Louisville and Florida State. Edwards is rated in the top five in just about every poll.

Interestingly, two of Edwards' former high school teammates are with the Gators this season. They are 6-2 guard Jose Ramos and 6-9 forward/center Cesar Portillo.

□ **QUOTEBOOK:** Here are some noteworthy comments by sports personalities on various subjects:

Wimp Sanderson, Alabama hoop mentor, on who is the real Wimp Sanderson:

"He is certainly not the guy you see on the sidelines at gametime. I think that question could better be answered by the people around me. I don't think I am the kind of guy who has let the success go to my head.

"I can pretty much fit myself in with anybody. My friends in high school are the same ones I have now. I come across as hard-nosed, but among people I'm close to, I'm just the opposite. I think during the games, my competitiveness comes out. I have a lot of pride, I want

to be successful and that surfaces when I get in those situations."

Doug Todd, the publicity man for the NFL's Dallas Cowboys, after learning that **Robin Givens** and her mother, **Ruth Roper**, were at a recent Dallas-New York Giants game:

"They're after Herschel Walker."

Sonny Smith, Auburn roundball coach, on his free time:

"There are only three things I do. Not in any particular order, that list includes playing tennis, listening to country music and visiting with my family. I'd be a good couch potato because I enjoy watching television, but I can't sit still. About the only place I'll sit still is my office. I'm a much more private person than people would think. I don't go out in public a lot, except to eat. I'm kinda dull to be honest with you."

Don DeVoe, Tennessee basketball coach, on his troubled times last season and on his current squad:

"Let me be very candid when I say it's nice to be back because there was a time when I didn't know if I would be back.

"We might have a chance to be a great basketball team. Then again, it may not be such a great team. We think we can have a pretty big and pretty strong team, but where you actually win in the SEC is through your ability to score on a consistent basis. We have not had that the last couple of years. We had too many games when we'd go out and shoot 40, 41 percent."

C.M. Newton, Vanderbilt basketball coach, on discussions about reducing the SEC schedule from 18 league games to 14:

"I have always favored the 18-game conference schedule. In the most recent voting with the coaches, however, I voted for the 14-game schedule in an attempt to present unanimity. I did it for one reason: to see if the proponents of the 14-game schedule were right. To see, in fact, if it would improve our scheduling opportunities and increase national attention to our league.

"The issue seems settled in that the coaches voted for the 14-game schedule and the athletic directors and the presidents voted to retain the 18-game schedule. I would be willing to try the 14-game schedule on a two-year experimental basis, but my personal preference is to continue with the 18-game schedule."

Sanderson again, this time when asked to compare Alabama freshman forward **Marcus Webb**, who is 6-7 and 255-pounds, to NBA star **Charles Barkley**:

"Well, they are both 6-7 and black, but then not every 6-9 white player is **Larry Bird**. We like Marcus' wide body out there, but whatever he doesn't eat, he fouls."

□ **DIS 'N' DATA:** LSU has announced that it will participate in the preseason Big Apple NIT at the start of the 1989-90 season. The other teams expected to compete are Kansas, Nevada-Las Vegas, North Carolina State, DePaul, St. John's, Ohio State, Texas-El Paso, Wichita State, Richmond, Alabama-Birmingham, Southern Mississippi, California, Houston, Loyola-Marymount and North Carolina A&T...

The SEC has at least four roundball players who were born in foreign countries. They are Florida's **Cesar Portillo** (Venezuela), Georgia's **Neville Austin** (Virgin Islands), LSU's **Geert Hammink** (Holland) and Tennessee's **Ian Lockhart** (Bahamas). There are more than 100 foreign-born players in NCAA Division I...

Did you know that Alabama's faculty chairman of athletics, **Dr. Thomas Jones**, earned his bachelor of science degree (1959) and his juris doctorate (1961) from the University of Kentucky?...

I wish you Happy Holidays...