

Brown key ingredient in Vikes' title season

by Frank L. Christlieb
Battalion Staff

Larry Brown's a pretty popular figure in the Bryan-College Station area these days.

While names like Jackie Sherrill, Shelby Metcalf, Tom Chandler and Merrill Green have dominated area sports talk during the past year, Brown's name and his short, thickset build have become court-thold regulars.

You know Larry Brown, don't you? He's the fellow who led the Bryan High School Vikings to their first-ever state basketball championship a couple of weeks ago.

With a community of support behind them, Bryan's no-name coach and no-name players saved their best show for the state final in Austin against Fort Worth Paschal. What could Paschal, the District 6-5A runner-up during the regular season, do against Brown's Boys from Bryan, who had played both great and just good enough to win at various times before entering the state playoffs?

Nothing. It's plain, simple and quite obvious from the looks of the 71-54 pile of whitewash the Vikings threw on Paschal.

But it's doubtful that Brown, who was honored when Bryan Mayor Richard Smith proclaimed Monday "Larry Brown Day" in Bryan, could have forecast a state title earlier in the season. The 35-year-old Viking coach, who just finished his fourth season at Bryan, says it took a while for the pieces to fall into place.

"We just had the right chemistry and everybody played their roles," he said in an interview during a recent practice session which featured tryouts for next year's Viking squad. "Like our point guard (Billy Chambers) — his role was to handle the ball and get the ball to the other peo-

ple. Rod Bernstine, our big rebounder, had to hit the boards and be the muscle man inside. He did a great job.

"When you have people play their roles and do it well, there's no jealousy and selfishness among the other players."

Brown, who considers himself a follower of the ways of John Wooden, Bobby Knight and Dean Smith, heard all kinds of talk about his squad during the season. No major-college basketball talent. With an average height of 5-10 among the starters, how could the Vikings win the district crown, much less the state championship? Injuries, injuries, injuries. What could Brown do to fight back against the adversity and the negative attitudes?

"Before the season started," he said, "we thought we had an excellent amount of depth. But then we had James Flowers, who had knee surgery after a football injury, and another starter, Sean Snedecker, broke his ankle in the first game of the year. Greg Dunn was another player who hurt himself during football season. So that's three key players who were out for the better part of the year."

In addition, Steve Reddell, the starting post during the 1981-82 season, quit the team in December to concentrate his efforts on Bryan baseball.

"We had to regroup when we had those injuries," Brown said. "Some of our younger players didn't really come through like we thought they would. We searched early in the year by playing a lot of people — about 14 people on varsity at the same time, but we never could find the right combination of people until midway through the district schedule."

But then Brown received some advice from an unlikely source. He took it, and it paid off

for him and the Vikings.

"My wife gave me some advice," Brown said. "She said I needed to play (wingman) William Dickson. I've always had a lot of confidence in William, but she's had a lot more confidence in him than I have. She said I needed to stay with him."

"Then after one of the games when we'd played bad, she told me we needed to play less people in order to let them get into the flow of the game. I had been taking them out and putting others in, so we never really got anything going."

And after all the shuffling had been done, Brown emerged with a full deck that included 6-foot forward Dickson, 5-8 point guard Chambers, 6-foot guard Kevin Bradsher, 6-3 post Bernstine and 6-1 forward Darrell Mitchell. Add to that sixth man Kenny Keller, and you've got the stars of Brown's 34-5 state championship show.

Brown described his team as "a little bit immature in some areas." However, he said, the team's play and maturity improved as the season progressed.

"We started out the year winning a lot of games," Brown said, "but we weren't overpowering anybody. By the time our players started blending together, we started getting some leadership, especially from Rod Bernstine. When his leadership started coming through, the other kids responded."

"Rod would beat up on (Kenny) Keller all day in practice and Keller got better and better every day. Keller got the respect, too. He didn't quit or cry about it. So overall, we did mature quite a bit as the season progressed."

Brown said two games during the regular season could be classified as "turning points" for the

See BROWN page 13



Bryan High basketball coach Larry Brown blows a bubble while watching a Viking game during the past season. Brown, in his fourth year at Bryan, coached

the Vikes to their first state crown since the school opened its doors in 1971. Bryan compiled a record of 34-5, defeating Fort Worth Paschal for the title.

When Micheaux speaks, the UH Cougars listen

United Press International
HOUSTON — Larry Micheaux, the only senior in the Houston Cougars' starting lineup, has gained quite a reputation as the team's top lecturer.

At each stop along the way in the NCAA tournament, Micheaux has had a last-minute reminder for his teammates that it's a serious time of year.

"I had my usual talk with the guys before the game," Micheaux said. "This is my last year and I try to pep up the guys. Micheaux gave his usual pregame talk Sunday in Kansas City

and whatever he said should have been put on tape and used Saturday when the Cougars take on the Louisville Cardinals in the NCAA semifinals.

The team that has won 25 games in a row, earned the top ranking at the end of the regular season and reached the Final Four for the second straight year has only one senior in the starting lineup.

And that's Micheaux, the 6-9 Houston product who turned 23 two days before the Cougars destroyed Villanova in the Midwest Regional finals, 89-71.

"I always tell them they'll be back next year," he said. "I won't. This is it for me. I want to go out a winner. I guess they took my speech to heart against Villanova."

Micheaux scored 30 points, combining with the seven-foot Akeem Abdul Olajuwon and steady guard Michael Young for 70 points — one less than the entire Villanova squad.

In their three tournament games thus far, the Cougars have had to display patience against the stall tactics of Maryland, have had to thwart a super-

star in Memphis State's Keith Lee and had to play a physical brand of ball against the rugged Wildcats from the Big East Conference.

And being physical is what Houston does best.

"Villanova said they wanted to play a physical game," Micheaux said. "I hope they got what they wanted. I like to play physical and that is the way we all played in that game."

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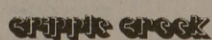
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