

The Battalion Sports

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Reaching goals

Aggie basketball star Britton returns for degree; hopes to aid youth after graduation

by Dave Scott
Battalion Reporter

When David Britton is asked about his life in Harlem, New York and the ghetto, he manifests a first bring out the fortunate aspects of his upbringing.

"Harlem was a great political forum back in the 60s," Britton said recently. "The foremost political leaders always came here first."

But there were unfortunate aspects of living in Harlem as well. And Britton's upbringing, no doubt, was an education he will not soon forget.

Another education Britton said he will not forget is the one learned as an athlete on a big-time basketball team. That is, how to cope with adversity.

Britton, co-captain of Texas A&M's Southwest Conference champion basketball team in 1980, says he fell short of his basketball goals because he missed just 10 days in the NBA.

Summing up his career, Britton said: "I fulfilled my goals (of reaching the NBA) but I didn't sustain them."

Now, four years after leaving A&M, the ghetto-born Britton is back in school to finish his education and accomplish the new goals he has set for himself.

Britton says he wants to complete his B.A. in journalism and soon to help young athletes as a consultant/agent. Britton said he knows how some athletes are misinformed and he feels he has the right kind of experience to help them.

To say the least, Britton has plenty of experience, both on and off the basketball court — you might say he was born with it.

And although Britton would

rather talk about the future, certain events during his upbringing in the ghetto are difficult to forget.

"Looking out the window in Harlem, it was just as exciting as watching television, you can find action in both," he said.

Britton has memories of violence and abundant drugs, but there was a bright side. For instance, he had the opportunity to meet such personalities as Malcolm X, Muhammad Ali, John F. Kennedy, Robert F. Kennedy and Martin Luther King.

But Britton said he remembers "masses" of people standing on street corners, shooting up with heroin.

Britton said he remembers seeing older friends succumb to this type of environment, yet he feels he was never seriously tempted by it — and he credits that to his parents.

"I really don't think I could have resisted on my own," Britton says.

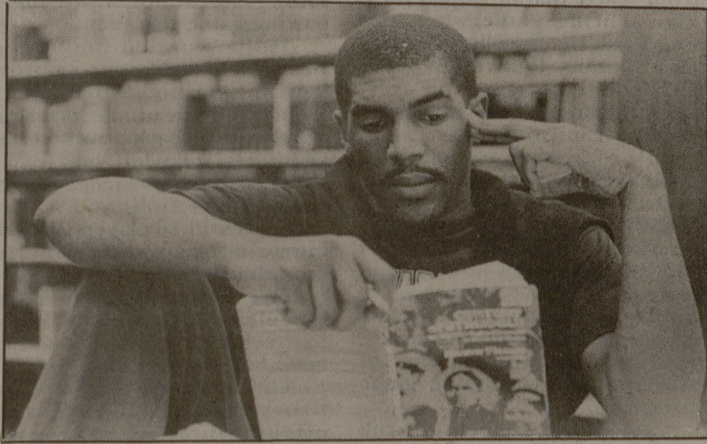
From the time he was old enough to attend school, his parents made sure of that.

Britton said his parents placed him in an open enrollment program which meant he would be bussed out of Harlem to a predominately white school in the Bronx.

It allowed him to be educated by better teachers but it also gave him the chance to come back to Harlem after school, Britton said, to "keep up his black culture."

And part of that "culture" in Harlem is basketball. Not your everyday basketball either — street basketball of the most intense kind.

It didn't matter that baseball was Britton's first love, basket-



David Britton is back at A&M trying to finish his studies and earn a B.A. in journalism.

ball was a way of life in his neighborhood.

"The rule of Harlem," Britton called it. "When you reach a certain height you are expected to participate."

Although Britton was only 5-8 when he started playing, word spread of his incredible jumping ability. "I've been able to slam since I was 16."

Britton grew to 6-2, but it was still his jumping ability and quickness carried him to his short stint in the NBA.

Britton was playing in the Continental Basketball league when he was contacted by the Washington Bullets. It was during the 1981 season and Washington needed Britton to replace a guard that had been injured.

The Bullets signed Britton to

a 10-day contract — a fairly common practice in the NBA. He played in 5 games during that time, and by his own estimation, he held his own.

At the end of those 10 days, Washington let him go and he wasn't contacted again.

"At the time," Britton says, "I wasn't real depressed, I didn't realize that it was my last shot."

He thought he would go back to the CBA to wait and try to make a name for himself in the pro ranks. A few months later he was out of competitive basketball forever.

Britton already had a name for himself when he transferred to A&M in 1978 after 2 years at Potomac College in West Virginia. And at A&M his name and basketball skill continued to grow.

Britton says the highlight of his playing days as an Aggie was winning the Southwest conference championship in 1980. He was named most valuable player of the SWC tournament.

But being a most valuable player was nothing new to Britton.

Once in a championship game of a high school tournament, he scored 56 points when his team was down to 3 players because of fouls. Britton's team won the game and the tournament.

"I usually play well in tournaments and under pressure," Britton said. "Before I play a game, I always believe that I'm going to win. If I believe that I'm going to lose then I don't need to go out there. All I can do is hurt myself."

His stats as an Aggie tell the story. The 2 years Britton played for Texas A&M, the Aggies had a combined record of 50-17.

"At A&M winning is the bottom line," Britton said when asked about how he got along with coach Metcalf, "so we got along. You can talk all you want before, but the bottom line is winning. And that meant talking more after the game."

After the SWC tournament Britton had nothing to do until the NBA draft in June.

He was drafted in the 3rd round by the Dallas Mavericks. He lasted a little over a week before being cut. Britton said that was an emotional low point.

"First, I had expected to be drafted before the 3rd round," he explains, "and because Dallas was an expansion team, when I got there I was surrounded by players who had years of experience. They just didn't need a rookie guard."

Britton didn't give up. He tried the CBA until he tore cartilage in his knee and he was forced to quit.

But basketball was the only thing he quit.

"I tried to get a job after the injury, but I was turned down. My resume looked pretty good for someone off the streets but I decided I needed something to back it up," he said.

So Britton's decision was to come back to Texas A&M.



David Britton stares down a defender during his playing days as a guard for the Aggies.

**MSC Great Issues
General Meeting
Thursday, November 3
8:30 P.M. Room 410
Rudder**

UT-Husker game 'impossible'

United Press International
DENVER — Officials of the NCAA and the universities of Nebraska and Texas say there will be no national championship football game between the two schools next January.

Barry Fey, a promoter of rock concerts and other events in Denver, had guaranteed the schools \$1.5 million each to play the game at either the Superdome or the Rose Bowl in mid-January. But an NCAA spokesman said the game between the nation's two top-ranked teams would violate NCAA rules, and officials of the schools said they were not interested.

David Cawood, assistant executive director of communications for the NCAA, said NCAA Division I schools are limited to 11 games and a postseason bowl game each season.

"A game like this simply couldn't happen without some special act of legislation by the NCAA," Cawood said Tuesday. "I'd say it's just impossible."

DeLoss Dodds, Texas athletic director, said he had written to Fey saying the "game is contrary to NCAA rules, and we simply

aren't pursuing it."

"As a fan, I'd love to see such a game," Dodds said. "As an administrator, it simply won't happen."

And Nebraska Athletic Director Bob Devaney said the Cornhuskers "simply aren't interested in that one."

"I don't care how much money he might guarantee or

whether or not he gets approval from the NCAA," Devaney said. "I'm not going to waste my time talking about it."

"The national champion is decided at the end of the bowl season by the polls," he said. "And besides, we're No. 1, so why would we want to play the No. 2 team?"

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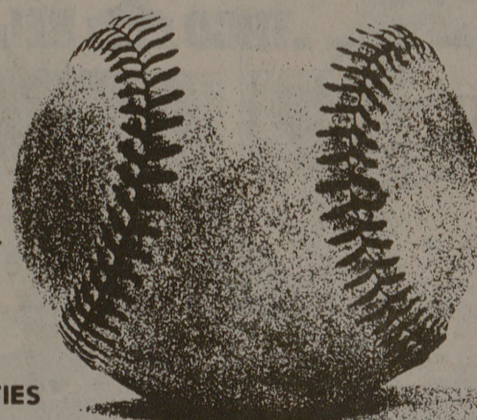
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