

## Last weekend a good one for UNLV sports

by Ched Whitney

From Larry Johnson's 32-point outburst Friday night to the Rebel football team's 35-31 upset of defending Big West champ San Jose State to the 9,000-plus crowd that showed up for Saturday-Sunday's Midnight Madness basketball kickoff, last weekend was a successful one for UNLV sports.

Johnson, now a bonafide NBA star—he just signed a contract to be the league's spokesman—had a triple double (12 rebounds and 10 assists) in leading his Charlotte Hornets to a 130-123 exhibition win over the Portland Trail Blazers.

Johnson, who told the press Thursday he no longer felt a part of UNLV, received many ovations from the crowd of over 14,000 during the game. His introduction sent the Thomas & Mack crowd meter to 113—an impressive feat considering the crowd was 4,000 short of capacity.

After the game, Johnson warmly reflected on the crowd.

"These are my people," he said. "I've always felt at home playing in Las Vegas. It's great to be able to come back and play in front of the Las Vegas fans."

"I don't like what some UNLV administrators did, but I love this Vegas crowd."

The crowd size for an exhibition game had to be a good sign for those who hope Las Vegas can land an NBA franchise.

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The Rebels' 35-31 come-from-behind victory over San Jose State, the Big West Conference's defending champ, has to be the kind of victory Coach Jim Strong has been looking to build on.

Suddenly, the Rebels are one interception—John Ma'ae's late in the fourth quarter of the Rebels' 14-10 loss to Nevada-Reno—away from being in the thick of the Las Vegas Bowl race.

Hopefully backup quarterback Bob Stockham's 247-yard, four-touchdown (including a 48-yarder to Ma'ae) performance has convinced Strong the Santa Rosa Junior College transfer should be the starter.

One sour note: the small crowd will make it difficult for UNLV to convince the Western Athletic Conference it

should be admitted.

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Even with the end of the Tark era in UNLV basketball, small crowds are still not a worry.

Over 9,000 showed to watch "Midnight Madness," the official start of the college basketball season. The crowd for the 10:30 p.m. show saw various entertainment culminating in an intra-squad scrimmage.

New head coach Rollie Massimino watched as former Atlanta Hawks head coach and current color commentator for NBC Mike Fratello teamed with Jim Valvano, former head coach at North Carolina State, to coach the "Red" team against the J.R. Rider-led "Black" team, coached by Los Angeles Dodgers manager Tommy Lasorda and Dick Versace, former coach of the Indiana Pacers.

The game, after a 12-minute first half, a 10-minute second half and a one-minute overtime, ended in a 62-62 tie.

Rider, who seems quite capable of taking on the role of team leader was impressive on the court and seemed in good shape. Massimino called the 12:01 a.m. scrimmage "a very successful evening."

Valvano, who made his first public appearance since being diagnosed with cancer five months ago, was glad to be back on the court.

"The thing I miss most is the locker room pre-game," he said. Valvano spoke to the team before the game.

Valvano said his illness has caused him to look at things differently now. "This is a whole other world that I've entered," he said. "I learned how precious life is and how important friends and family are."

"Basketball is a wonderful game. (But) I wouldn't be quite as upset about an 'L' as I used to be."

Despite his illness, Valvano said he hopes to continue with a full schedule as a college basketball commentator for ABC and ESPN.

"I hope this isn't one of those final tour type of things," he said.

Ched Whitney is editor in chief of The Rebel Yell



photo by Rob Weidenfeld  
Wide receiver Henry Bailey was named Big West Conference Offensive Player of the Week for his performance against San Jose State last Saturday. The Rebel pass catcher gained a school record 313 all-purpose yards, in the 35-31 Rebel upset over the Spartans.

## Rebels travel to Utah State

### Need win to keep conference hopes alive

by Anthony E. Zuiker

Before heading to Utah State this weekend, the Rebels have one request for San Jose State upon their trip to Reno.

If their conference nemesis beats the Nevada-Reno in Mackey Stadium, then the Rebels' hope for a division crown is still alive.

While the UNLV football team handed the Spartans a stunning 35-31 loss last week-



end, the Rebels are hoping for a San Jose State mauling of the Wolf Pack this weekend.

In order for the Rebels to capture a Big West Conference title, UNLV must defeat the Aggies in Logan, Utah, and hope the Spartans beat the Wolf Pack in Reno. However, if Nevada-Reno wins, the Rebels' hope for a Big West title are over.

The Rebels and Aggies kickoff at 12 p.m. Saturday at

Romney Stadium. Utah State leads the series 7-4 over UNLV and have won the last four contests including a 27-14 triumph last season at the Silver Bowl.

The Aggies also remain alive in the conference championship race. Utah State is tied with San Jose State for second place with a 2-1 mark in the Big West and 3-5 overall. However, UNLV is fourth at 2-2 in conference action and 4-4 overall.

Junior college transfer Anthony Calvillo leads the Utah State offensive machine as quarterback. The La Puente, Calif., native has only been intercepted three times in 215 passing attempts.

## Johnson prepares Hornets for NBA rumble

### Former UNLV star makes immediate impact on the league

by Nick Haley

It's easy for a young team like the Charlotte Hornets to become intimidated by tough, physical veteran squads like the Portland Trail Blazers or the Detroit Pistons. That is, of course, unless the team has a Larry Johnson to stand behind.

Since coming to Charlotte as the first pick of the 1991 National Basketball Association draft, Johnson has made teams think twice about pushing the Hornets around. His 6-foot 7-inch, 250-pound frame better suits a linebacker than the forward spot he plays for Charlotte.

Nothing new for Johnson; growing up in Dallas, Texas, he boxed five years for the Police Athletic Boxing League. His aggressiveness under the basket and unselfish style of play have allowed him to make a name for himself after only one season.

"He's one of our stars, a star of the league," said Allan Bristow, head coach of the Hornets.

Already people are putting him at the level of Magic Johnson. Johnson said he feeds on this pressure to succeed.

"I love it," he said. "I wouldn't have it any other way."

Bristow came to Charlotte



Charlotte Hornet Larry Johnson, the 1991-92 NBA Rookie of the Year

last year with Johnson. In his first year, Bristow led one of the NBA's youngest teams to its best record yet, 31-51. Along with Johnson, he built the team of the future around Kendall Gill, J.R. Reid and Tyrone Bogue, all of whom had less than five years experience. Despite their youth, all showed improvement throughout last year and are expected to reach the playoffs in 1993.

"You've always got to hope that you'll be playing in June," Bristow said. "We're a young team. You just have to continue to build, work hard. You know you're going to go through some down periods but...we really have a lot of strength overall."

But it's Johnson that gives the team the muscle it needs in the paint. It's Johnson that led the team in rebounds (12.0 rpg)

last year, finishing second in scoring (19.2 ppg). And it's Johnson that exchanges elbows with the best of a league known for intense, physical play.

The transition from UNLV to the NBA wasn't automatic, however. Johnson, who was used to winning all the time, said he had no problem handling the losing but had some difficulty getting used to the pro system without the benefit of training camp.

"It's a big adjustment," he said. "You try to prepare yourself over the summer. It's kind of hard to prepare yourself for something you've never been through, coming in as a rookie. It's hard to get ready for 82 games. You try to come here in the best possible shape you can and hope for the best."

"It certainly helps to get in some camp and get accustomed to the system and what your coaches and your teammates expect from you. It helps to get that out of your system so when regular season rolls around, you're ready to go and you know what's going on."

Despite his late start, Johnson went on to earn 1992 Rookie of the Year honors. Johnson, though pleased to have won, was more interested in his contributions to his team.

"My main thing was trying to get my ball club to win more games," he said. "Of course it (Rookie of the Year) was a goal of mine, just not a primary goal. My first goal is to get my club to the playoffs."