

## J.R. Rider wins college slam dunk championship



PHOTO BY WRAY HALTERMAN

Evric Gray took a surprising second to Lindsey Hunter in Sunday night's 3-point shootout held at Tulane University.

### Evric Gray runner-up in 3-point shootout

BY PAUL GUTIERREZ  
SPORTS EDITOR

Though the UNLV basketball team was not in New Orleans as part of the Final Four this weekend, the heart and soul of the Rebels (J.R. Rider and Evric Gray) made their collective presence felt at the Fifth Annual College Basketball Slam Dunk and Three-Point Shooting Championships held at Tulane University Sunday evening.

Rider won the slam dunk portion over Louis Davis of Northeast Louisiana, electrifying the crowd at Fogelman Arena while Gray fell just short to Jackson State's Lindsey Hunter, 17-14, in the long-ball competition.

Rider led from start to finish, eventually winning the ESPN telecast event with more than 60 percent of the phone-in vote. The second team All-American began the night off with one of his patented windmill dunks and led after the first round with a score of 39.1 out of a possible 40.

Rider then scored the only perfect 40 of the event on his second dunk. The maligned star of UNLV started on the baseline and sprinted down the line before going airborne. In mid-air, Rider switched the ball from his left hand under his right thigh and threw it down hard with his right. The crowd went crazy, Gray met Rider and the duo bumped chests before doing the trademark Runnin' Rebel hand clasp.

"That's a dunk I've been doing since high school," Rider told ESPN following the event. "And



PHOTO BY PAUL GUTIERREZ

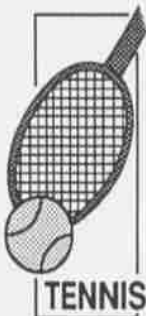
J.R. Rider beat out Louis Davis to win the fifth annual college basketball slam dunk championship.

see SLAM DUNK page 6

## Rebel stringers continue tough schedule with USC match

BY GREGORY QUINN  
STAFF WRITER

One has to admire UNLV Coach Larry Easley for playing the best college tennis teams in the country. His men's squad could have easily won 15 matches had they stuck with doormats like Idaho State and Texas Tech. Instead, they've taken on the likes of UCLA, Pepperdine and Stanford, and lost dismally. Their overall mark is a lackluster



The Trojans are 12-2 overall, with both losses suffered against

ter 8-9. "Boy, we have a tough schedule," Easley said. "With the team we've got, we can't expect much."

Easley probably won't expect much today when the Rebels visit West-Coast giant USC.

top-ranked UCLA. They are led by their marquee player, junior lefthander Brian MacPhie, ranked No. 2 in the pre-season singles poll and No. 1, with teammate Jon Leach, in the doubles poll. Last summer at the Newport Grass Court Championships, MacPhie upset No. 1 seed David Wheaton, then ranked 17th in the world. An All-American as a sophomore, MacPhie's dual match career record is 51-13 in singles and 20-

4 in doubles.

MacPhie's teammate, Leach, is the son of Trojan Coach Dick Leach. Leach, ranked 22nd in the pre-season singles poll, was a practice partner for Grand Slam winner Stefan Edberg during the 1991 U.S. Open.

All this simply spells trouble for the Rebel tennis team. The good news is the season is almost over. After playing the Trojans, UNLV will host the Big West

Team Tournament, which they anticipate winning, then travel to Ojai, Calif., for the conference championships. The NCAA tournament is a distant dream.

"What we're trying to do," Easley said, "is make sure (the players) don't get discouraged when they play these tough teams, so that they don't lose to a weaker team. We only have three or four weak matches. The rest are Top 25."

## Winning isn't everything, it's the only thing

BY JAY SAPOVITS

Whoever said, "It's not whether you win or lose, it's how you play the game," was, simply stated, a loser.

In fact, the true statement should be, "It's not if you compete at all, it's if you're awarded the win."

Who doesn't mind losing? Losers!

If you don't believe that statement then read this story about the softball team I'm playing for in the men's division intramurals.

Last Saturday, Taus (that was the name of a team who bailed on the league and whose moniker we took over, then unofficially changed to Sauce Workers) was scheduled to play a double-header. The first game at 9 a.m. against the Hittin' Skynz and then at 10 a.m. against the Trojans. The Skynz only had one player show up, thereby constituting a forfeit. The vic-

tory went to us, the Sauce Workers, despite never taking a swing or making a catch. Thus, we won and the bottom line was achieved with the fleetest of efforts.

In the second game, the Trojans fielded a team. However, two of our players left to attend a Saturday class. Once again, academics took precedent over athletics.

The rules of the league state that eight players are required to start a game and we had the minimum.

The final score of the second game: Trojans 9, Sauce Workers 7.

Nobody made excuses. So what if we were short two players. It didn't make us try any less, in fact we all worked harder.

Left, center and right became this side and that side. Every out became critical because every batter had the potential to hit a gapper. The competition was not fun, it became tense, exhausting and painful.

### Commentary

While undermanned, we still took a 3-1 lead into the fourth inning. In the bottom of that frame, the Trojans exploited the open field for seven runs.

Good defensive plays kept the game close. A sinking line drive into the gap was caught at shoe level on a dive. A line-drive comebacker to the mound was stabbed to save two runs. A leaping catch at shortstop saved another potential rolling home run.

I made the diving catch, straight onto the pavement-like ground that wouldn't budge for a meteor. Instantly, blood seeped out of two perpendicular four-inch gashes on my upper thigh. The ground cut my left arm and scuffed my shins as if sand paper had been rubbed up and down on them.

If diving helped us to win, then good. If not, who cares?

Without the win, nothing else matters. The forfeit is better than the loss, under

any circumstances.

Who cares how well the whole team played? What's the bottom line?

One win and one loss.

The greatness of the competition bores me. It's only great in victory. Losing teams rarely embellish on the wonder of the event.

Ask Kentucky how they liked New Orleans.

Ask UNLV basketball or football how they enjoyed last season.

Nobody can enjoy the bumps, pains and bruises that accompany losing. Winning nullifies the pain.

Only from the perspective of an outsider does the competitiveness matter. Eight forfeits in the scorebooks look like this: 8-0. A perfect record and that is what counts.

—Jay Sapovits is  
KUNV sports director and  
columnist for The Rebel Yell