Illini's Battle earns respect off court, too

By Linda Young

When Kenny Battle leads Illinois into the NCAA tournament semifinals Saturday against Michigan, his teammates, coaches, friends and fans will see him, as usual, as the Illini's champion of hustle on the floor.

But the staff and residents, past and present, of the Roundhouse, a children's shelter in Champaign, will think of the 6-foot-6-inch Battle as a card player. Or as a guy willing to shoot some hoops at the playground or jump in the pool or just go for a walk with the children who have stayed there.

"Some people are just nice people, they reach out to others," said Kathy DeLap, a house counselor at the Illinois Children's Home and Aid Society facility who worked closely with Battle during his two summers as a volunteer there. "That's what he did. He's someone the residents could pattern their life

The Roundhouse shelters disadvantaged, abused or runaway teenagers, age 13 to 17.

Battle transferred to Illinois from Northern Illinois three years ago with every intention of showing the Big 10 and the nation his passion for basketball. He has done that very well, scoring more than 1,000 points during his two seasons at Illinois and providing the emotional leadership for a team that won a school-record 27 games during the regular season, earned the school its first No. 1 seed in the NCAA tournament and reached the Final Four for the first time in 37 years.

But he didn't realize then just how he would also demonstrate his love for children.

"I always wanted to work with children, so I applied for the job and I was accepted," said the 24year-old Battle, who will graduate this spring with a degree in political science. "I got along with the kids pretty well. They looked to me as a role model, and if they had a problem, sometimes they'd come to me and we'd try to work it out.

"If they wanted to go to the gym or go swimming or just go walking and just talk, that's what we would do. I was always there for them and I think some of them really grew attached to me."

"Sometimes, even now, Kenny will stop over and visit," said DeLap. "We played a lot of cards when he was around here. He was such a good person for them to follow and he had an affection for them, too. It's something you could see. It's a gift, I think."

That gift could stem from growing up in a family of 12 children. The family didn't have much money, but it had each other.

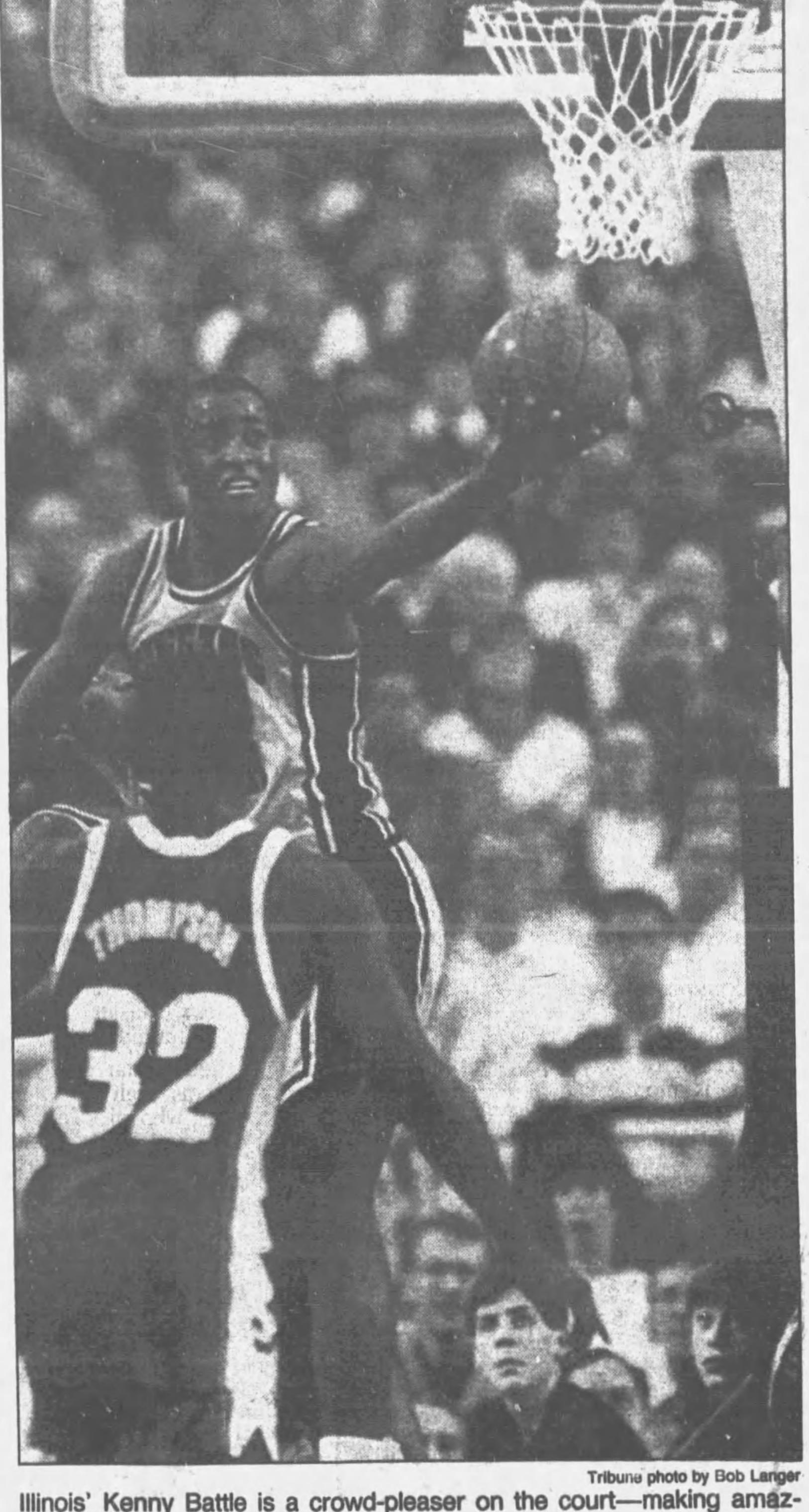
"I went to school, played sports, went to church," he said. "I kept to myself a lot, but our family was together all the time. We had a good time."

Battle's gifts reach beyond the athletic feats that thrill a crowd with some variation of a 360-degree dunk or the on-court hustle that has prompted Illinois coach Lou Henson to name a team trophy after Battle.

It's a gift of caring. John McDougal, Battle's coach for two seasons at Northern, sees it.

"He's most refreshing, especially in this day and age when you pamper athletes and cater to every whim, to have a guy who doesn't ask questions," said McDougal, who became an assistant at Western Michigan after leaving Northern. "He's the type of guy who makes you immediately fall in love with him.

"He has high ideals and aspira-



Illinois' Kenny Battle is a crowd-pleaser on the court-making amazing no-look shots like this one against Syracuse—and off the court.

tions, and he always felt that the way to be successful was to pay his dues. He has a compassion for people. There's no big ego here, yet he has great qualities in terms of his character and the way he applies himself."

McDougal was the first college coach to woo Battle during his three seasons as a varsity starter at West Aurora. Sometimes he was the only one. Battle had no qualms about signing with the Huskies after an all-state high school senior season in which he led West Aurora to a third-place finish in the Class AA state tournament.

He scored 1,072 points in two seasons at Northern and was twice named all-Mid-American Conference. But when McDougal, who remains a close personal friend, was fired and the Huskies' dropped out of the MAC, Battle moved on.

He moved to Champaign, where he brought along a work ethic rarely seen—one that has inspired both his teammates and coaches. At the end of this season and every season hereafter, Henson will poll his team and award a Kenny Battle trophy to the Illinois player who consistently shows the most hustle, both during practice and during

"I felt that anybody who works that hard during practice, and I'd never seen it before, should be an inspiration to everybody," said Henson, who has coached college basketball for more than a quartercentury. "I thought if this is an inspiration, let's make it more meaningful. So I told the players that starting this year, we're going to give a Ken Battle award for the guy who puts the most into every sea-

"You talk about guys who give

110 percent," said McDougal. "But here's one who really does it."

Battle, a second-team all-Big 10 pick, is not eligible for the trophy. But trophy or no trophy, he has been an inspiration to his team,

"He'll be on the point of the press sometimes," said guard Stephen Bardo, "and he'll exert so much energy and cause so much havoc for the guys up front that you're thinking, 'Heck, I've got to work as hard as he does or even look like I'm working hard because he's working so doggone hard." He's just an electrifying player who is unique in that his personality just shows on the court and everybody can see that. It's contagious."

"I've never played with a basketball player that plays with the intensity he plays with," added forward Nick Anderson. "He's such an exciting player that you love to play with him and you hate to play against him."

When the NCAA tourney ends, so does Battle's college career. National Basketball Association scouts project him as a second-round draft pick and many think he'll play professional basketball for years to come.

"It's something I'm going to try to endeavor for a long time," he said. "I love the game so much, I don't want to misuse it."

But, NBA or no, there's always the Roundhouse kids and those like them to come home to. Kenny Battle will be there.

"I guess I have a soft heart," he said. "If there's something I can do to help someone else out, it's something I'm willing to do. I guess I just have respect for others and, hopefully, they have respect

They do.

Big 10 ready to name Delany

By Skip Myslenski Chicago Tribune

SEATTLE—Jim Delany will be introduced as the new commissioner of the Big 10 at a press conference in Chicago next week. Delany, currently the commissioner of the Ohio Valley Conference, also will become head of the NCAA Basketball Committee litical science. after the current festivities here.

Delany was due to arrive in Seattle from the OVC office in Nashville late Thursday, so was not available for comment. But C.M. Newton, the former Vanderbilt coach who just took over as athletic director at Kentucky, was on hand and was effusive in his praise of Delany.

"First of all, he's a very straight up guy. What you see is what you get," said Newton, who himself is considered a man of great integrity. "He's very open. Very honest. A good communicator.

"Secondly, he's very, very bright and not a traditionalist. He respects tradition, but he's willing to take risks. He's a very creative man, and he has a lot of guts."

The 41-year old Delany, who will succeed Wayne Duke, was a tri-captain at North Carolina in NCAA notebook

the 1969-70 season. He was a reserve guard behind the other two captains-former NBA star Charlie Scott and new Vanderbilt coach Eddie Fogler-and graduated with a bachelor's degree in po-

He went on to study at the London College of Law and at the North Carolina School of Law and received his Juris Doctor degree from the latter in 1973. He spent the next two years working for the state government, and in January of 1975 joined the NCAA Enforcement Staff in Shawnee Mission, Kan. Four years later, in July, 1979, he was named OVC commissioner.

When he will fully take over as Big 10 commissioner was not yet clear on Thursday. But sources indicate they expect Delany to show up at the conference's Schaumburg offices off and on between now and June before Duke turns all duties over to him after the conference commissioners' meeting later that month.

College basketball's three-point line, which is now 19 feet 9 inch-

es from the basket, could be moved back to the international distance of 20 feet 6 inches before next season. That, in any case, is the hope of the rules committee of the National Association of Basketball Coaches.

The committee has already made that recommendation to the NCAA Rules Committee, which will meet Sunday and announce any rule changes on Tuesday morning. "Personally, I think the line is too close," says Notre Dame coach Digger Phelps, the head of the NABC's rules com-

And finally, here's Newton on the recent rash of coaching changes: "There was a time when it was, 'College basketball? So what?' There wasn't the visibility or the expectations that there are

"I think much of what's happened is the pro mentality dropped down. You can't fire teams so fire coaches, that type of thing. People forget we're dealing with 17-, 18-, 19-year-olds. Sometimes as coaches we forget that, too. We put demands on them that are not realistic when considering their educational responsi-

Agents probe tied to attack on rival

By John Gorman

The investigation of sports agents Norby Walters and Lloyd Bloom began after the slashing and beating two years ago of Kathe Clements, an associate of rival sports agent Steve Zucker, U.S. Attorney Anton Valukas revealed Thursday.

Outside the presence of a federal jury in the trial of Bloom and Walters, Valukas made the disclosure in a meeting among U.S. District Court Judge George Marovich, defense attorneys and prosecutors. However, Marovich ruled the information would not be presented to the jury.

Clements, the wife of former Notre Dame quarterback Tom Clements, was attacked by a masked man in her Skokie office on March 16, 1987. The incident occurred after Zucker and Clements had signed three of the defendants' former clients—then Tennessee wide receiver Tim McGee, Nebraska running back Doug DuBose and Washington defensive lineman Reggie Rogers.

"I'm prepared to show that the investigation started with the beating of Kathe Clements and her linkage to Walters and Bloom .. and was not due to some NCAA pressure," Valukas told Marovich.

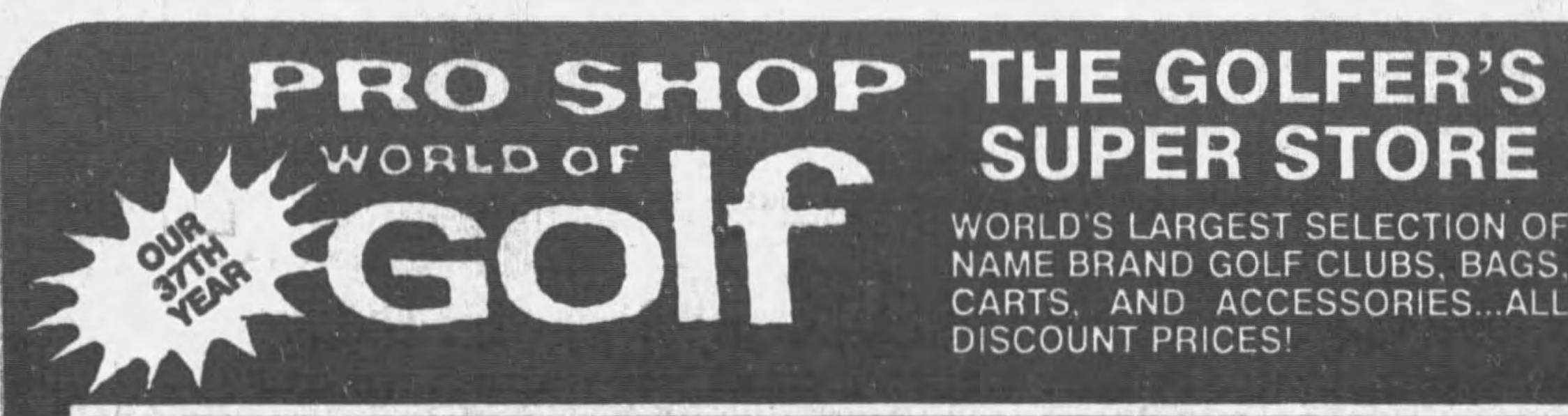
Walters, 58, and Bloom, 29, are charged with defrauding several universities by convincing the athletes to sign representation agreements, in violation of NCAA eligibility rules, and concealing the existence of the agreements.

Also on Thursday, FBI agent John O'Neill was called to rebut earlier testimony by Joseph Grant, singer Dionne Warwick's manager, about a June, 1988, meeting of

Grant, Walters and three other

Grant had denied he told O'Neill that one of the men with Walters had dark hair and was in his mid to late 20s—a description that would match Michael Franzese, a mob chieftain who had testified he helped Walters "muscle" unruly clients. But O'Neill testified that Grant had given just such a description at their interview last year.

Under cross-examination by one of Walters' attorneys, Ethan Levin-Epstein, O'Neill said he had interviewed Grant on orders from Chicago office FBI agent George Randolph in an effort to discover a relationship between Walters and Franzese. But O'Neill admitted he had not brought a photo of Franzese to ask Grant to identify him, even though such photographs were



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Peoria's Lewis in that other Final 4 "With her ability to score inside From Chicago Tribune wires TACOMA, Wash.—Basketball

purists at the men's Final Four in Seattle are in for a treat if they head south to Tacoma to watch Louisiana Tech defend its NCAA

women's basketball championship.

Pay attention to No. 40 for the Lady Techsters. That's Nora Lewis. "At no other time in the history of our program have we had a more valuable player than Nora Lewis," Louisiana Tech coach Leon Barmore said. "Without her, there's

no way we'd even be in the top 10.

What makes her so great is that she

does everything so well. Without a

doubt, Nora Lewis is the heart and soul of our team." She's not the team's highest scorer. She doesn't lead them in rebounds. She doesn't run the court like a bluestreak or make eye-popping passes that would turn an op-

ponent inside-out. But the Lady Techsters probably wouldn't have a chance to repeat without her. That's why Lewis' name is appearing on college All-American rosters.

"You have to love a player like dows competitor," Barmore said.

and outside, she's probably the most productive six-foot player I've ever seen. She's also developed into an excellent team leader." Lewis will lead the third-ranked

burn (31-1) Friday. The other semifinal game pits top-ranked Tennessee (33-2) against No. 5 Maryland Wherever Lewis has been, success has followed. The Peoria, Ill., native helped lead Richwoods High School to one Illinois state title and three

Techsters (32-3) against No. 2 Au-

top three finishes. Richwoods rolled up a 119-5 record during her career, and Lewis was USA Today's "National Prep Player of the Year" as a senior. During her career at Louisiana

121 of 134 games. "Nora has always been a fierce competitor," said Mary Kay Hungate, Lewis' high school coach who now is a Louisiana Tech assistant. "In the big games, that's when

Tech, the Lady Techsters have won

she plays her best basketball." Lewis has averaged 18.5 points and 10.9 rebounds, second-best on Lewis because she's such a tremen- the team to center Venus Lacy. Her contribution has helped ease the

loss of point guard Teresa Weatherspoon and leading scorer Erica Westbrooks from last year's team.

"No one really knew what to expect from this team early in the season," Lewis said. "We had so many new people and they all had different personalities. But right from beginning it was fun. Everybody got along."

It took a 62-61 overtime loss to Tennessee for Lewis to fully measure the team's talent. She wasn't "We lost the game but we found

out we could play with them," Lewis said. "I didn't know how good we were until we lost by one point. Everybody expected Tennessee to blow us out." As Louisiana Tech beat Stanford

for the Midwest Regional crown last

Saturday, Lewis' effort was typical.

She scored 18 quiet points and

pulled down a game-high 13 re-She's a position rebounder and defender, and she moved her feet well enough to give Stanford's 6feet-3-inch Trisha Stevens all kinds of problems. Stevens tried to postup her shorter opponent but Lewis swiftly stepped around her to bat

away Cardinal passes.