

COLLEGE BASKETBALL

Illini still looking to improve

By Robert Markus

The best Christmas present Illinois coach Lou Henson could receive would be word that 6-foot-9-inch freshman Deon Thomas can join the team for the Big 10 season.

But Henson is a big boy now, and he knows Santa doesn't always fill our stockings with the goodies we request.

The Illini could enter the Big 10 season 10-0, ranked fourth in the country, and probably a little overrated.

"We don't mind that [being highly ranked]," says Henson, "as long as people understand we have to keep getting better."

But it's hard to keep getting better when a team that is already suspect at center loses its best defensive player at the position.

Against Wisconsin-Green Bay Saturday night, Andy Kpedi's absence was hardly noticed.

The Phoenix had no real board bangers and the athletic Illini were able to pile up an overwhelming 39-18 rebounding advantage in their 71-47 victory.

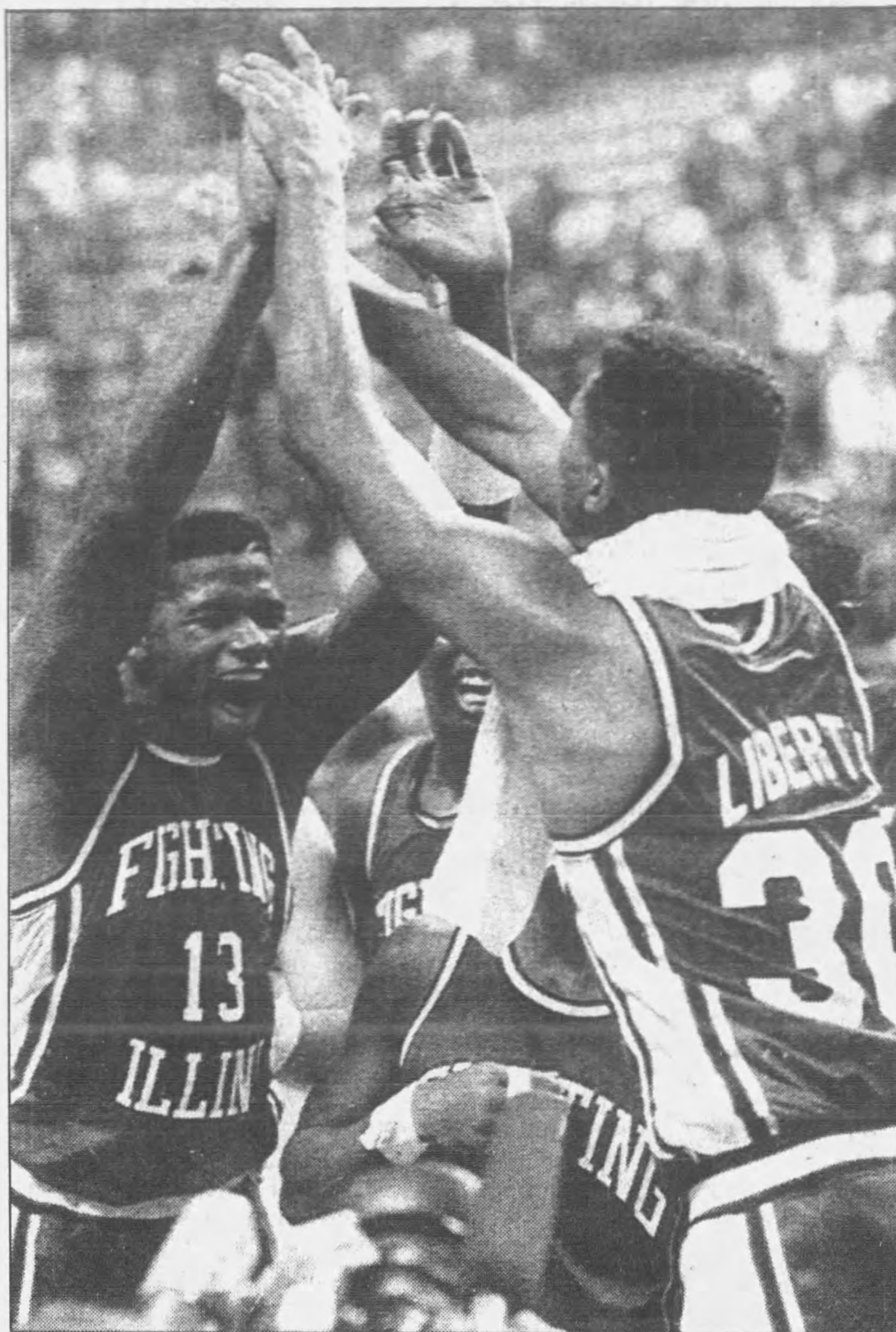
But when they have to play Minnesota on the road and Michigan at home without Kpedi, it could be another story.

"We're down to the bone right now," says Henson. "We have nine scholarship players."

And, with Kpedi out for up to four weeks with a stress fracture, "we can't ride the shoulders of the two guards and Marcus Liberty," says Henson.

So far those three have shouldered the load admirably.

Kendall Gill leads the team in scoring with 19 points a game



AP Laserphoto

Illini teammates Kendall Gill (13) and Marcus Liberty celebrate after Illinois downed Missouri 101-93 Wednesday in St. Louis.

after scoring 25 Saturday night, point guard Stephen Bardo is the top rebounder with 7.6 a game and Liberty is a close second in both points and rebounds.

"He's playing like one of the best players in the country right now," says teammate Gill.

But, with Bardo needed to help

out with post defense on occasion, "Brooks Taylor needs to come along and help at the point," says Henson.

"We've been playing P.J. [Bowman] at backup point guard. He's never played it until this year, and I still think he's a better 2 guard."

UIC glad with record, but still unsatisfied

By Gary Reinmuth



As records go, it's more nice than naughty.

Illinois-Chicago is 7-3.

It's a mark that ought to keep the Flames' spirits bright this holiday season, despite their decade-closing 70-63 loss to Drake Friday night in Des Moines.

As UIC coach Bob Hallberg looks ahead to his team's Jan. 3 home game against Iowa State, however, there are some potential time bombs ticking away inside the pretty package.

X-ray the contents and you see a team that:

- Has yet to win on the road (0-3), unless you count a 70-54 conquest of Loyola at the user-friendly Horizon.

- Has won seven games, but only one—Michigan State—against a heralded foe. Northeastern Illinois is in its first year of Division I and lost to Oklahoma by 95 points. North Park is a Division III school. Central Florida and Idaho State had losing records when UIC played them, Loyola and Tennessee State were at .500.

- Is shooting just 39 percent from the floor, seventh-best among the eight Association of Mid-Continent Universities teams (winless Valparaiso was just percentage points behind) against nonconference competition.

- Once it gets past its big three of Chris Harris, Brian Hill and Corwin Hunt, has been lacking depth offensively.

That UIC is 7-3 despite such

problems is testament to its panic-inducing man-to-man defense, which game-in and game-out has been superb, limiting opponents to just 62.6 points a game.

"The first half against Drake," said Hallberg, "we played the greatest defense I've ever watched a college basketball team play."

But because the Flames' offense wasn't so great (38 percent from the floor), they lost.

"I definitely thought we'd be much more productive offensively," Hallberg said. "It's one of my major concerns. Our defense is where we want it to be but our offense has been very disappointing to me. We may possibly have to do something to restructure it but I'm not sure that'll help. Our shot selection is as good as it's been all year."

"Against Drake we missed four layups in the first three minutes. I thought we could have been up by 15 at half. Some of the shots we missed were just jokes."

Also no laughing matter has been UIC's missing bench. Missing as in misfiring. Sixth man Mike Clark is averaging five points a game, forward Ed Af-folter four and freshman forward Felando Thigpen checks in at 3 p.p.g.

Thigpen had one of his best games of the year Friday, scoring 6 points and grabbing 5 rebounds in 11 minutes, but he sprained a thumb early in the second half and sat out the rest of the way.

"He [Thigpen] finally played the way I thought he was capable of playing," said Hallberg. "I keep forgetting he's a freshman. It's taking him time to adjust. I went through the same thing with Brian Hill last year."

De Paul starts on road back

By Bill Jaus



If De Paul scales the summit after a 3-7 start and makes the NCAA tournament field, as coach Joey Meyer believes it can, it will know exactly where the Great Climb began.

It happened Saturday some 10 minutes into the Marquette game that De Paul eventually won 71-62 to snap a five-game losing streak and make its record 4-7.

Up to that point, one De Paul player would dribble against Marquette's zone, four teammates would stand and watch and all five behaved as though the zone was a strange defense from an alien planet. The pace was so sluggish that Marquette coach Kevin O'Neill said, "I even wanted De Paul to score a basket. ... to get things going."

Suddenly, the Demons began behaving as though Meyer's mid-night message to his players had clicked in 15 hours later. De Paul began snapping brisk passes against the zone and sent players cutting along the baseline.

Basic basketball, but, combined with fierce man-to-man defense, it broke a losing streak and got the Demons thinking maybe their coach was right when he told them, "You can still make the NCAA tournament."

It's a long shot, but at least the Demons seem to have learned belatedly how to attack the zones they will continue to see, because they lack outside shooters.

Also, after 11 games, Meyer appears set on a lineup: sophomore Melvon Foster at point guard, freshman Terry Davis at off guard and a front line of junior Kevin Holland and sophs Stephen Howard and David Booth.

Foster is the key. Meyer wanted him to be his off guard, but Foster doesn't shoot well enough and B.J. Tyler and Chuckie Murphy had turnover troubles at the point. Foster made just one turnover in 31 minutes of point play against Marquette, while Davis hit two 3-point shots among his 14 points.

Booth, Howard and Davis led the Demons in scoring with 18, 16, and 14 points, respectively, against Marquette, and each played standout defense, limiting their three men to a total of 10 points.

"Davis can play defense when he really concentrates on it," said Meyer.

"Davis played mostly zones in high school, but he has a lot of raw talent. And Howard has improved defensively, too."

Poor rebounding could imperil Wildcats in conference play

By Neil Milbert



Unfortunately for North-western coach Bill Foster, there was nothing Santa Claus could put in his players' Christmas stockings that will enable them to jump higher.

Rebounding was the paramount problem for the Wildcats last season, and it continues to be their biggest potential impediment to success this year.

In Foster's opinion, it was a telling factor in Thursday's 69-68 loss at Brigham Young that sent the Wildcats (5-2) into the Christmas break on a down note.

Despite being at a height deficit with four shorter starters, Brigham Young had a 33-31 edge in the rebounding department—much to the dismay of Foster.

"They had some easy shots on second shots, and they made them," he pointed out.

"We missed a lot of stick-backs. Brigham Young's leapers don't compare to Michigan's and Illinois' and that's what we have to get ready to go up against."

Of the seven teams that Northwestern has played, Duke is the only one that measures up to Big 10 standards. In that 103-77 loss, NU took a 48-30 beating on

the backboards.

The only teams the Wildcats have gotten the best of on the boards are Illinois-Wesleyan and Wisconsin-Green Bay in the first two games of the season.

Opponents are pulling down an average of 40 rebounds a game, while the Wildcats are getting 37.

Last season in Big 10 play, Northwestern averaged a meager 28 rebounds a game, while opponents averaged 37.

Since the Wildcats are neither going to grow during the season nor get springs implanted in their legs, Foster must devise means of minimizing the problem that is

resurfacing despite relatively easy noncon-ference competition.

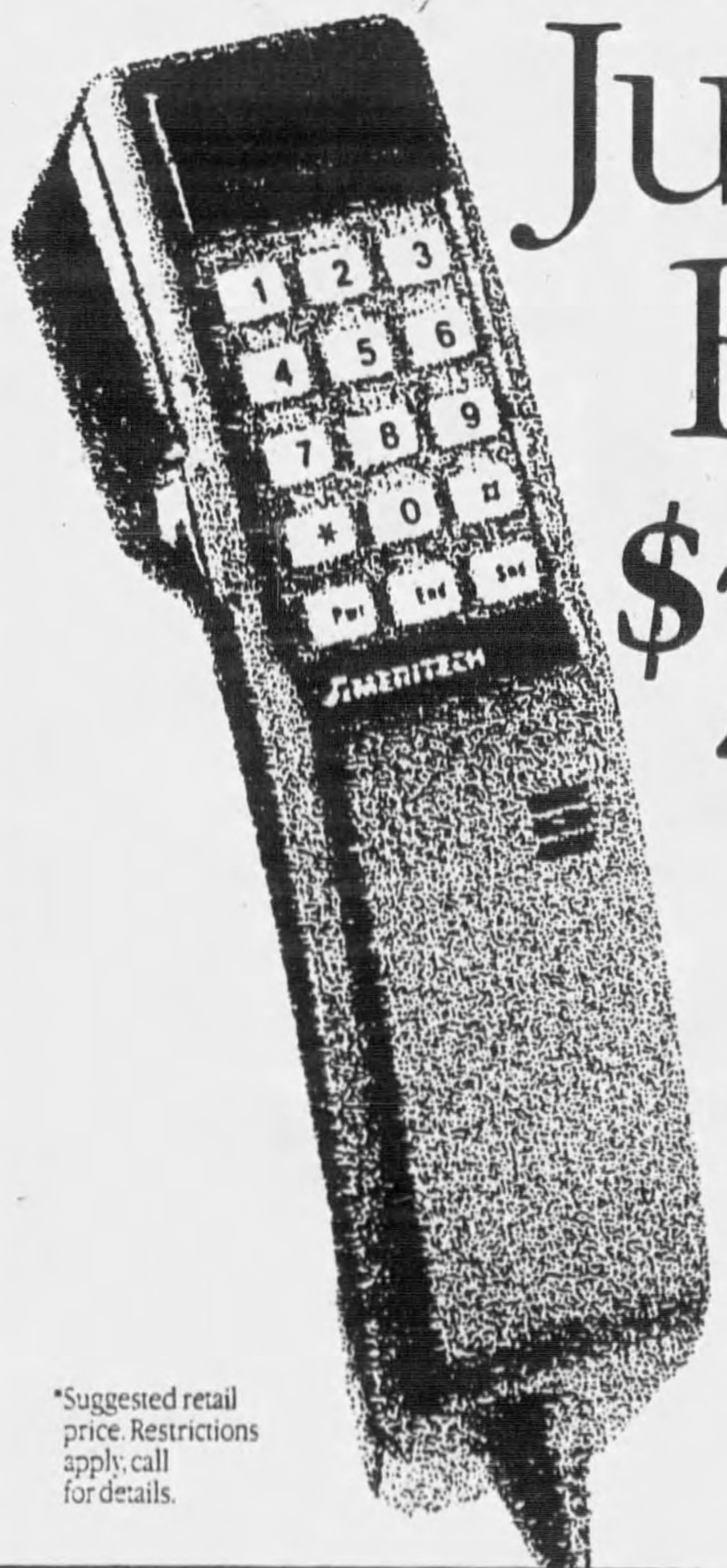
After practicing the morning after the Brigham Young game in Provo, Utah, the Wildcats went their separate ways on a three-day Christmas vacation.

Workouts will resume Tuesday in Nashville, Tenn., in preparation for the Music City Invitational Tournament.

Northwestern will take on William & Mary, and host Vanderbilt will meet Alaska-Anchorage in first-round games Friday.

The championship and consolation games will be played Saturday.

Our Best Deal Just Got Better.



\$249*

- Built in America By Motorola.
- Featuring the Ameritech Mobile coverage advantage.



Ameritech 5-Star Dealers
1-800-MOBILE-1

*Suggested retail price. Restrictions apply, call for details.

Call Your Ameritech 5-Star Dealers

ARLINGTON HEIGHTS CelluLand Sound Experience	226-6000 259-2881	EVANSTON Sound Experience	492-1430	NILES Metrocom Communications	967-1150
AURORA CelluLand	896-6383	EVERGREEN PARK Illinois Communications Co. Triangle Mobile	243-0588 1-800-992-4545	NORTHBROOK Chicago Mobile Telephone Sound Experience	449-5060 498-3895
BARRINGTON Sound Experience	382-3911	FRANKLIN PARK Chicago Communication	451-9500	NORTH CHICAGO Sound Experience	689-8180
BERKELEY Chicago Mobile Telephone	449-5060	HIGHLAND, IN Triangle Mobile	1-800-992-4545	OAK PARK Triangle Mobile	1-800-992-4545
CHICAGO Chicago Communication	451-9500	LAKE BLUFF Metrocom Communications	234-5200	ORLAND PARK Metrocom Communications	403-8200
Chicago Mobile Telephone	449-5060	LINCOLNWOOD Triangle Mobile	1-800-992-4545	PALATINE Metrocom Communications	991-5900
Illinois Communications Co.	243-0588	MUNDELEIN Chicago Communication	451-9500	SCHAUMBURG Sound Experience	351-6022
Metrocom Communications	772-4900	NAPERVILLE CelluLand	898-8383	WHEATON Chicago Communication	668-5553
Triangle Mobile	1-800-992-4545	ELMHURST Metrocom Communications	717-7100		

Loyola finds strength in numbers

By Bill Jaus



Before Christmas arrived, Loyola coach Will Rey, stars Keir Rogers and Keith Gailes and the Ramblers' role-players already had disproved some of their skeptics.

Some longtime Loyola followers predicted that this team couldn't win on the road and that it might have to settle for three victories all season.

By winning at Tennessee-Chattanooga and in overtime at Cal-Irvine last week, Loyola evened its record at 3-3 going into Wednesday's game against Texas A&M in the Hoosier Classic in Indianapolis.

Should the Ramblers register another upset, they'd probably face the Hoosiers in Thursday's title game.

Two reasons have surfaced for Loyola's over-achievements thus far.

Rogers and Gailes, stars under former coach Gene Sullivan's run-and-gun style of offense, have willingly and successfully adjusted to Rey's emphasis on a slower tempo, tougher defense and a motion offense.

And the role players who join Rogers and Gailes in the lineups are not total zeroes offensively. Most are Division I scholarship holders who can hit an uncontested jumper.

Of course, Rogers and Gailes should have adjusted willingly to Rey's offense, because many of

the screens and picks are set to free the two juniors for their shots.

"Loyola is the most unselfish team I've seen," said Cal-Irvine coach Bill Mulligan after Rogers (35 points) and Gailes (28) combined for all but 15 of Loyola's 78 points.

Had the Anteaters resorted to gimmick defenses against Loyola's two stars, as future opponents may, the non-scorers who set the screens and dished out the assists at Irvine stand ready to shoot and score.

The return to eligibility last week of Doug Borders boosts the offense with a 6-foot-7-inch, 215-pounder who averaged nine points a game as a starter through the second half of last season.

Danny Stevens, playing his first year of college ball, was the No. 7 prep scorer in Indiana with a 28-point average at Edison High in Lake Station. Freshman Brian Wolf is a threat from 3-point range, and freshman Gant Moehring has a quick first step and a decent jumper.

Make no mistake. These are not double-digit scorers. Yet, they provide just enough offensive punch to become bothersome to gimmick defenses that Rogers and Gailes are likely to see in 1990.

Loyola plays archrivals Bradley and De Paul in the first week of the new year. Then the Ramblers plunge into Midwestern Collegiate Conference competition.

FROM PAGE 1

Verdi

Continued from page 1

Gwynn stands to be only the sixth highest-paid player on San Diego's roster at \$1 million a year.

Fiscal Insanity II: For the sake of television exposure (i.e. money), some college basketball teams started games at 11:30 p.m., local time. The Ohio Valley Conference was big on that under commissioner Jim Delany, who was promoted to the Big 10, which is getting bigger as we speak.

Fiscal Responsibility: This catch-all excuse became the cliché of the '80s, but on occasion, it applied. The United States Football League sued the National Football League for \$1.69 billion

but was awarded \$3 in treble damages, an accurate reflection of worth.

Best Game: United States 4, Soviet Union 3. Lake Placid, Feb. 22, 1980.

Second Best Game: Jack Nicklaus' final round in the 1986 Masters, which he won, for a sixth time.

The Game That Won't Go Away: Padres 6, Cubs 3, San Diego, Oct. 7, 1984.

Unsafe At Any Speed: Rosie Ruiz got there on wheels, Ben Johnson got there on drugs.

Sad, Sadder, Saddest: Pete Rose, A. Bartlett Giamatti, Len Bias.

Florsheim Awards for Most Footprints on the Tongue: Lee Elia, Al Campanis, Jimmy "The Greek" Snyder.

Gone Away, but Not Far Enough: Barry Switzer Dana

Kirk, Norby Walters, Lloyd Bloom.

Can We Try It Again?: Bill Buckner, T.C. Chen, Don Denkinger, Scott Hoch, Mary Decker.

Words to Remember the 1980s By: Steroids, upon further review, no mas, Grabowski, replacement players, triple double, square grooves, Schottzie, boycott, Margo Adams, intensity, pine tar, velocity, renegotiate, strike, death penalty, collusion, ESPN, Steinbrenner.

Stop The Presses: Dino Ciccarelli, then a hockey player for the Minnesota North Stars, got himself in a heap of trouble by running to the driveway to fetch his morning newspaper, a noble pursuit. Dino's newsmen—he wore only a shirt. But to Dino and all other avid readers of the sports pages, a Merry Christmas.