



John Frazier, Jefferson junior, breaks the tape at 200.



"Tinman" Frazier receives close scrutiny from Dorothy and Scarecrow from Jefferson H.S. cast.

John Frazier: Leading a double life

Since playing the Tinman in Jefferson's production of "The Wiz" in the fall, John Frazier, a junior, has evidently discovered the right brand of oil. He's currently burning up the track in the 100, 200, and a member of both relay teams. And if you listen to what he says, there's not that much difference between performing on stage, in the classroom, or on the track. "You have to listen to your coaches, work constantly, and take criticism," he says.

John's is an interesting success story, and he's come a long way since last spring's disappointment of being disqualified in the 100 for state competition. This year his goal is to qualify for the state meet in four events.

As the Tinman, Frazier wowed audiences with his vocals and stiff-jointed antics. Performing, whether on stage or on the track, is not new to him. He sings with Jefferson's vocal jazz ensemble and concert choir and as a ninth grader he took a first year theatre class from Carolyn Gratton, theatre teacher and director for "The Wiz."

John says he has learned a lot from performing. "I got to know myself more and what I could do," he says in reference to his experiences behind the foot lights. He also stressed that commitment is necessary in both athletics and theatre to do well. "There's just one head man, and if he asks you to do something different, you do it," Frazier laughs. Gratton may have helped teach him that lesson. Frazier auditioned for the Lion's part, but the director felt he was better suited as the Tinman.

In addition to a full schedule of academic classes, athletics and music, John still finds time for outside activities. He is a member of the Vancouver Avenue Baptist Church choir. June 5 he will be a featured soloist in the second annual Youth Sound Concert sponsored by the World Arts Foundation at the Jefferson Performing Arts Center.

Wednesday and Friday of this week at 3:45 p.m. at Madison High School, his mind will be on athletic performance at the city qualifying track meet where much of what Frazier has worked toward since he began training in November will be tested. Last year he failed to make it to state in the 100. This year may be different.

His times of 10.8 seconds in the 100 and 22.0 for the 200 rank second and fourth on the state's best list. He hasn't lost a race since last year's district meet, and he has outrun all the competition in front of him. Three weeks ago at the Centennial invitational he beat the state's leaders in both events.

What's the key to Frazier's multifaceted success? "He started working in November, set some goals, and we planned a daily workout schedule for him through mid-February when John took first in a state-wide field at the Indoor Invitational," explains Coach Vic Carlson. The enthusiastic coach goes on to say, "He responds favorably to everything we give him. He's the most fun kid I've ever had

to work with."

Mike Anderson, Jefferson's track coach who has worked with Frazier all three years, credits the young speedster as being an achiever in all that he's done. "His performances as a sprinter in the 100, 200 and a member of both relay teams squelches the myth that if you don't specialize you won't be any good. If anything his versatility has helped."

Frazier credits his coaches. "Carlson really pushes me, and I've learned from him and Mrs. Gratton to take criticism and keep trying." When asked who his stiffest competition is, he smiles broadly, "Myself." To ready himself for the week's qualifying meets he's been working on his finish line form.

So when the gun goes off Wednesday, spectators will again be en-

tertained by one of Jefferson's brightest stars. He's worked hard to get there, and this time slipping starting blocks and striped shorts won't stop him. Watch out! Here comes Jefferson's Tinman who's lubricated his joints and his mind with the help of a supporting cast including his family, coaches, directors, choreographers, and teachers. They'll all be there cheering him on.



Champional (Back row): Ken Stoffer, Ronnie Hertley, score keeper Lisa Bryant, Eric Mashia, Greg Taylor; (front row): Greg Brinkley, Welton Jordan, and Ralph Nickerson. (Photo: Richard J. Brown)

Lonely at top for under 6 team

Grassroot News, N.W. — When it comes to basketball, athletic ability, muscular versatility and competitiveness cannot be measured in height. Ralph Nickerson, organizer and manager of six feet and under basketball, says his team is living proof with 11 tournament trophies and the 1982 and '83 national crown. "We've won something like 45 or 50 straight games."

Nine years ago, star veterans from Portland's inner city high schools asked Nickerson to play. "I thought it was a good idea for a league with a height limitation. Also, the quality of ballplayers involved made the offer attractive. Our first sponsor was Geneva's and during that first year we won all our games and went to the nationals in Tacoma. We placed second in the nationals."

The idea of a six feet and under league originated in Tacoma, WA. "What they wanted to do was to provide an opportunity for guys on the shorter scale of height who had the skills to play basketball at a high quality level. It gives everyone a chance and it doesn't place height as a factor for talent." Nickerson believes the idea of the 6 feet and under league hasn't taken off like it should. "It is only a matter of time.

Once we get exposed to other cities, the potential for growth is there. We give everyone, regardless of height, the opportunity to excel."

So far, Oregon, Washington and Canada have a league established. "The team in Portland is the best and our record speaks for itself. Anytime we play you will see that our athletes are exceptional. We can jump and we have the speed. A lot of our players are pure basketball players and because they are six feet and under they never got the recognition they deserved."

Culturally, Nickerson says the Afro-American community identifies with basketball. "Right now, basketball is the most popular sport for blacks. In the NBA and in college ball, we are well represented. Everyone that plays in our league is very serious. Once the idea gets off the ground, it would provide an avenue for a lot more people to get jobs playing professional basketball. If there was a national league of basketball players under six feet, it could filter up into the National Basketball Association. Instead of ten players under 6 feet, there could be a hundred."

Players under 6 feet could add a new dimension to the NBA. The dynamic of a small person with the

acts and reacts of Iceman, Kareem and Dr. J. creates an exciting brand of basketball. Portland could be involved in creating a "megatrend."

The disadvantages of being a member of a small, but growing team, competitively speaking, has placed Nickerson and his teammates between a rock and a hard place. "In terms of competition, we can't see the light at the end of the tunnel. We can't find anyone of our caliber to play. Our short-term goal is to go to Los Angeles and introduce the league. Also, we want to develop some type of communication with the Women's U.S. Olympic basketball team. They are our size and would make a good competitor. We hope we could play them and for them, in return, to visit us up here in the Northwest. This would introduce and expose both teams. But until then, it's lonely at the top."

Aside from wanting the idea of 6 feet and under to receive the kind of recognition it deserves, Ralph Nickerson says the Albina Community has a lot to be proud of. "We need to get the word out about the talent underneath our noses. And it doesn't have to center around basketball. Not only are we number one as a team — but our community is as well."

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