

SPORTS

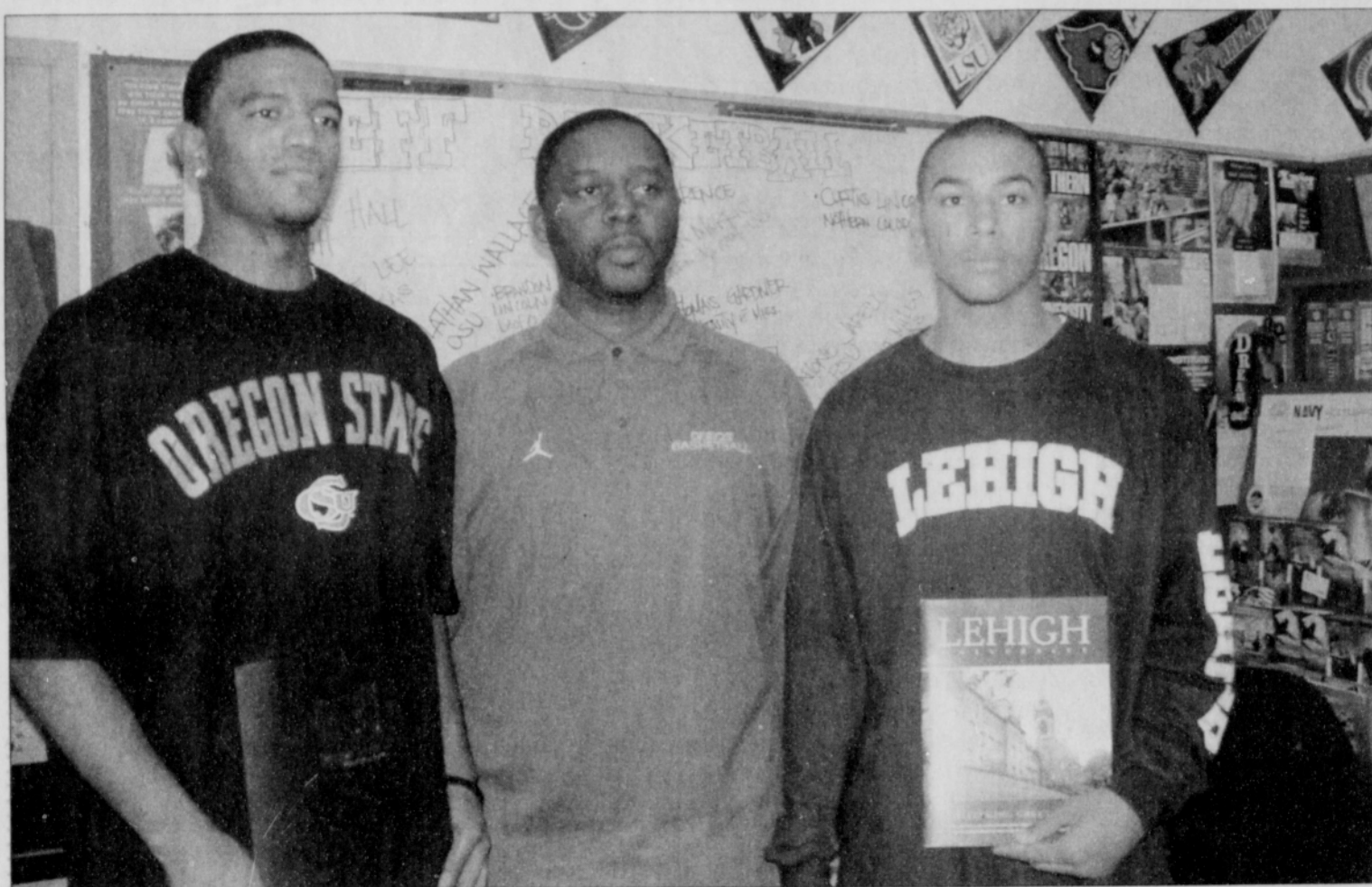


PHOTO BY MARK WASHINGTON/THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

Jefferson Guards Advance Careers

Lathan Williams Jr. (left) plans to attend Oregon State University next year and Marquis Hall will attend Lehigh University in Bethlehem, Penn. The Jefferson basketball seniors announced their intentions during national Letter of Intent Day with their coach Marshall Haskin (center.) Both students and their future schools were misidentified in last week's issue. We sincerely regret the errors.

Mayweather Looks Ahead after Knockout

Standing strengthens after Rose Garden victory

(AP) — A few days before his welterweight debut, Floyd Mayweather Jr. complained that many top boxers don't want to fight him.

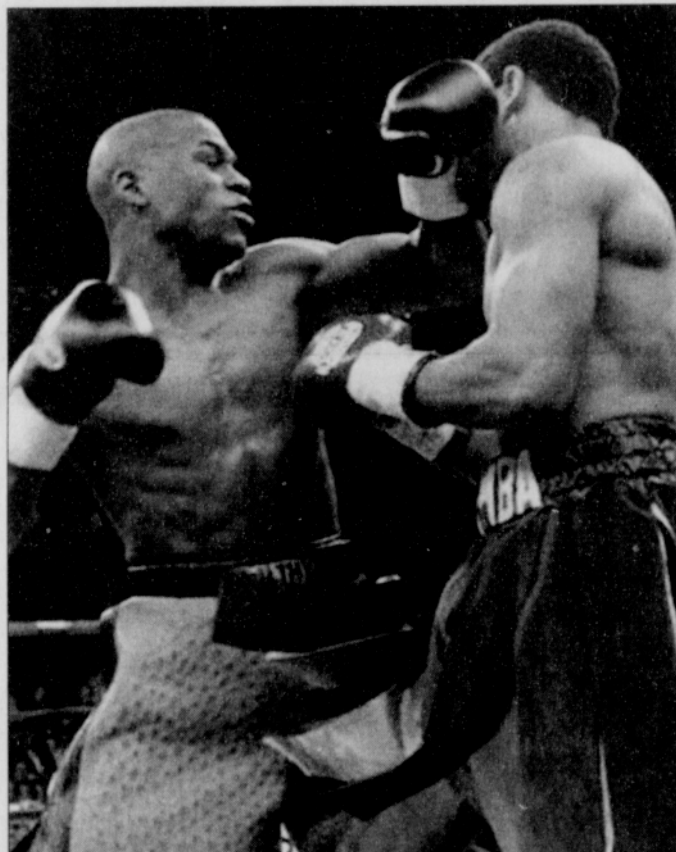
After scoring a sixth-round TKO over Sharmba Mitchell on Saturday at the Rose Garden, Mayweather said he wanted to fight three or four times in 2006, but he wasn't going to call out any particular fighter.

When pressed, however, he did have some financial advice for Zab Judah, the welterweight champion.

"Zab needs me so he can become a millionaire," Mayweather said. "If Zab don't fight Floyd Mayweather, he'll never be a millionaire."

Judah may not want the money after watching Mayweather rout Mitchell, the savvy left-hander who entered the Portland fight with a 56-4 record and left with his second knockout loss in three outings.

Displaying the hand speed and superior defense that are his trademarks, Mayweather ended the non-title bout with a straight right hand that landed below Mitchell's rib cage. Referee Rich-



Floyd Mayweather Jr. lands a punch on Sharmba Mitchell during the opening round of a welterweight bout at the Rose Garden on Saturday. Mayweather won the bout with a knockout. (AP photo)

ard Steele counted to nine before ending the fight with Mitchell sitting on the ropes. Mitchell complained that Steele stopped the fight too soon.

With the win, Mayweather strengthened his claim to be the best fighter in any weight class, the pound-for-pound champion. The 28-year-old Michigan native, who has won belts at three lower weight classes, said he won't duck anyone.

"Floyd Mayweather don't have no excuses. Floyd Mayweather will fight anyone."

Undeclared in 35 fights, Mayweather was in control from the start, landing right hands with ease. He absorbed little punishment from Mitchell, a former 140-pound champion who was making his second appearance as a welterweight.

Mayweather won every round on the judges' scorecards and landed 85 punches to Mitchell's 31. The vast majority of the punches Mayweather landed were power shots, and the knockout was the 24th of his career.

Ali Center Opening Draws Crowd in Louisville



Muhammad Ali hugs former President Bill Clinton as he walks onstage at the grand opening gala celebration for the Muhammad Ali Center, Saturday in Louisville, Ky. (AP photo)

(AP) — Muhammad Ali can still draw a big crowd. The boxing great took center stage in his hometown Saturday night to celebrate the opening of the Muhammad Ali Center, a six-story tribute to Ali's storied career and a legacy to his ideals of peace and tolerance.

The Hollywood-style event, at a performing arts center next door to the Ali Center, drew an adoring cast of actors, singers, athletes and even a former president, Bill Clinton — reflecting the champ's star appeal.

"The world is a better place because of you," Clinton said. "You thrilled us as a fighter and you inspired us even more as a force for peace and reconciliation, under-

standing and respect." Though frail, Ali still flashed his famous playfulness. As Clinton praised him, Ali discreetly put two fingers in a V-shape behind the former president's head, drawing laughter from the crowd and Clinton.

Clinton said Ali was unmatched as a fighter: "No one was ever more beautiful or brash or bright or powerful or fast in the ring. It was breathtaking."

Clinton said Ali's greatness continued long after his boxing skills faded and his career ended. "As your body slowed down, your heart speeded up, and I never saw anything quite like it,"

Clinton said.

Ali entered the stage holding his wife's hand, and it was Lonnie Ali who spoke for him as the champ sat on a stool. She said the center's opening showed that "if you work hard and you believe in yourself, you can accomplish great things."

Across the street, about 200

admirers chanted Ali's name when the champ arrived for the celebration. Ali struck a boxing pose and waved to his fans.

Lonnie Ali has said her husband hopes the center, an \$80 million project, will inspire visitors, especially youngsters, to reach their potential and promote peace.

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