

CHC- Commodores and Bisons Renew Rivalry

by Bill Traugher

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The interviews for this story are from 2000.

Thursday night the David Lipscomb Bisons return to Memorial Gymnasium for their first game against Vanderbilt since January 24, 1955. The Commodores defeated the cross-town rivals, 88-61 nearly 51 years ago.

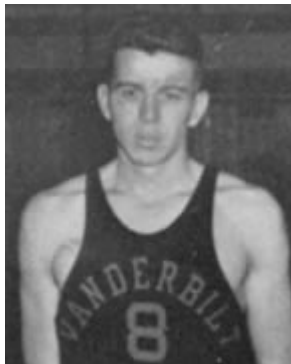
Elvis Sherrill was the Bisons' coach while Bob Polk led the Commodores in a game that attracted 3,000 fans. In that last meeting, a pair of sophomores led Vanderbilt in scoring as Al Rochelle poured in 25 points and Bob Thym recorded 21.



Sherrill (left) and Donaldson

Lipscomb's center Ken Donaldson led the Bisons with 19 points and John Friend added 13. Junior Gary Colson was a member of that Bisons squad. In a 34-year college coaching career, Colson had a lifetime record of 563-385 (Valdosta State, Pepperdine, New Mexico, and Fresno State). Colson is today a special assistant to Jerry West, the NBA Memphis Grizzlies President of Basketball Operations.

The Commodores were on Lipscomb's schedule consistently from the 1938 season through 1955. Vanderbilt leads the series with a commanding 19-4 all-time record. David Lipscomb was a junior college until 1946, when it became a four-year institution. At this time they became members of the Volunteer State Athletic Conference.



David Scobey

During the first two seasons, the junior college Bisons, who were members of the Mississippi Valley Conference at that time, embarrassed the SEC Commodores in three of their first four meetings with victories. Former Nashville Vice-Mayor, David Scobey, changed uniforms and moved from a Bison (1940-42) to a Commodore (1942-45) interrupted with a year of military service in the Navy.

"Vanderbilt teams back then weren't too strong," Scobey said from his Nashville home. "Being a local attraction with Pinky Lipscomb, (also a David Lipscomb Junior College graduate) who was one of Vanderbilt's all-time greats, helped to get the teams together."

David Lipscomb played their home games at the old Burton Gym on their campus, while Vandy played most of its home games in the old campus gym. The Commodores played their biggest games at the Hippodrome (presently the Holiday

Inn Select-West End) and area high school gyms. Scobey was a 145-pound Lipscomb team captain when he performed against Vanderbilt. The huge underdog Bisons gave an all out effort against the Commodores at all times.

"We played in junior college tournaments and Vanderbilt was our big game," Scobey said. "When I played for Lipscomb, we played Vanderbilt at the old Hippodrome which was a skating rink. The thing that made it nice for me was playing against Pinky Lipscomb as he was always one of my idols. He was a senior and I was a freshman so I played against him just one year in the 1940-41 season."

After graduating from David Lipscomb, Scobey continued his education at Vanderbilt. As a member of Vanderbilt's basketball team he found himself in a unique situation.

"We didn't particularly care about playing against Lipscomb because they were a junior college team," Scobey said. "Now we were on the other side of the fence. It always drew a big crowd because all the Lipscomb people would come hoping they would win again."

"The Hippodrome, which only held a couple of thousand people, would fill up when Kentucky was in town or when we played Lipscomb. It wasn't important for me to play against Lipscomb since we were playing teams like Kentucky and Tennessee. It was a game we didn't think to much about."

Playing Lipscomb enabled Scobey to play against his old teammates. He was captain of the Vanderbilt team during his senior season.

"We had several of our players from Lipscomb to go on to Vanderbilt," said Scobey who was also a Vanderbilt assistant coach under Bob Polk after graduation. "A lot of these four-year colleges liked to recruit junior college players. It didn't matter then since I was on Vanderbilt's team. Felix Ray, he was the center, and I had gone from Lipscomb to Vanderbilt so the two of us were playing against our old teammates."



Bob Polk

What was and still could be considered David Lipscomb's greatest basketball victory in history came on Jan. 2, 1951. The Bisons shocked the Commodores 59-57 with their fourth and final victory against Vanderbilt. This game was played at McQuiddy Gym, which opened in the fall of 1949. Vanderbilt used McQuiddy as its home floor for three seasons from 1949-52 as Memorial Gym was in the planning stages.

"It was a big win for us," said Roy Sewell, the junior captain for Lipscomb at that time. "It was our biggest game, they were from the SEC and Division I. We had played them before and were familiar with their players and offense. We were able to shut off some of the things they were able to do."



VU vs. Lipscomb

Sewell, who is from Sparta, was Sparta's boy's head basketball coach for 35 years. He retired with 629 wins. Sewell scored 16 points in that historic Bison victory to lead all scorers.

"We went into overtime in the first game they played us in 1951," Sewell said. "In that game, I hit a foul shot late which possibly would have won the game. They said I had my toe on the line and took the point away. So in that second game, I'm glad I was able to make up for my mistake. When we beat them it was the biggest thrill we had as players."

Harry Moneypenny was a senior at Lipscomb and the Bison's leading scorer during that 1950-51 season. He had a different perspective on playing Vanderbilt during his career.

"We first played them at the old Reception Center off Thompson Lane," Moneypenny said. "This was where the army kept German war prisoners during World War II. Then when we built our gym out there and played them

twice a year.

"The first game during that senior year, they beat us in an overtime and we had a good team. We only lost four ball games the entire year and won about 25. We lead Vanderbilt by 12 or 15 points the whole game.

"Beating Vanderbilt was the second most thrilling event I was involved in playing basketball. The first one was when we won the state high school championship (West High School in 1946). After you play them seven times and don't win, you come out on the short end and the eighth time you win then it becomes thrilling."

Traughber's Tidbit: Vanderbilt once attempted 120 field goals in a game against David Lipscomb in Memorial Gym. The record still stands today. Lipscomb has played in Memorial Gym in recent years with a game against fierce rival Belmont. The game was played on February 17, 1990 and attracted so many fans that the doors had to be locked, leaving hundreds outside and 15,399 inside. Lipscomb won that game, 123-107.

If you have any comments or suggestions you can contact Bill Traughber via e-mail WLTraughber@aol.com.