

Lewis scores 67 in pro league game

One more shot Raymond Lewis, still slick, still quick at age 27, is still trying to make it in the NBA — eight years after his explosive sophomore year at Cal State L.A.



Sports/C-1

Raymond Lewis wants one more shot

By Richard Lewis Special Features staff writer

Raymond Lewis was a brilliant 6'4 guard, the most fiery there, according to some. He was smooth, slick, quick, a career. He was smooth, slick, quick, a career. He was smooth, slick, quick, a career.

Today, Lewis is literally and figuratively shooting it out in small, high school and junior college gymnasiums, playing before crowds of some 100 fans. He is still trying to make it in the league, hoping, perhaps beyond hope, that a coach or general manager of a team will be impressed enough with his

remarkable shooting skills to give him one more shot at the big time. Lewis got his big break in 1972. He declared himself after his sophomore year at Cal State L.A. and was drafted on the first round by the Philadelphia 76ers. That month he quit, which has been Lewis' major mistake since.

According to one story, he tore apart Doug Collins on training camp and immediately demanded a trade. He took a contract he himself had signed. The story had him in an ill-humored mood, which he eventually did. He never played a minute for Philadelphia. His second shot came five years

Los Angeles

Lewis

Continued from page C-1

evening, Lewis, who had just scored 67 points in a wild, gun-tup summer league game, sits on the bumper of a Volkswagen, sucking up the cool fresh air, trying to catch his breath.

Even though the defense in the summer league is for the most part nonexistent, scoring 67 points remains a considerable achievement. Ask anybody who's ever played organized basketball. Many pro go their entire careers without ever hitting 50. Lewis has been doing it on a regular basis all his life. Two nights earlier he went for 55.

During the game he's a machine, just as he's always been on the playgrounds. At Fresno State and at Cal State L.A. After finishing six of his first seven shoots, he warms up and hits everything in sight, long jumpers, short jumpers, twisting his wrist. Everything runs. Nothing but net.

Inside the sunny Long Beach Polytechnic High School gym it is the twilight zone. The referees says 1001, but for Raymond and those watching, it may be a decade earlier.

Lewis — the people in the stands that at Lewis swishes one after another of those long, fall-back, baby jumpers. They look at each other, their eyes wide in wonderment, thinking, sometimes saying, "The kid can still do it." How hollow, an NBA referee who remembers Lewis from the good years in among those not surprised by his performance.

He was great in high school, says Hollis. One of the best, maybe the best, I ever saw. This leonard. He can step right in and play in the NBA today. Nobody can stop him. Nobody ever can.

Outside the gym Lewis mops his brow with the bottom of a blue sweat-soaked jersey inside, an other defensive game is in progress.

A 16-year-old boy of about 12 walks out of the gym. He spots and recognizes Lewis, immediately. "Good game, sir," the kid says shyly.

Lewis nods over and states appreciatively. "Thanks," he says. "I've heard all how things, they say about me," he says, his breath coming over him. "The stuff about drugs."

He shakes his head in resignation. "I've never been a drug addict in my life. Look at me. I'm a decent shape. If I were a drug addict I wouldn't have any kind of shape at all."

The body is lean, the muscles taut, the face handsome. No, he doesn't have the empty look of a junkie.

"For a guy who's supposed to be on drugs," he continues, "I think I'm looking pretty good. There were times all that stuff bothered me. I wanted to go up to people in the street and take them and ask, 'Do you think I'm a drug addict?' Do I look like a drug addict to you?"

But I learned a long time ago people are gonna say and think what they want. There's nothing I can do about it. Still, I don't understand it. I never say anything bad about people. All I can say is it's all false. I've never had problems with drugs."

But he has had other problems. For the last eight years, he's led the life of a basketball bum, playing in the schoolyards, on the playgrounds, in various leagues, always burning up the courts while burning away the days of his life. He's worked specifically, now for as long as two years at his father's market. Otherwise, he's been doing odd jobs, "odd things."

Financial support for himself and two children, Kamilla, 3, and Richard, 2, is and has been provided by Sandra, his wife of seven years, who works as a computer operator in SBC Market. For moral and emotional support, he has Sandra and his grandmother. Grandmother, Grandmother Grishy.

"I've been married seven years," he says. "And I'll tell you my wife is the best. The best. There's no telling when I'll be involved in it if I weren't for her. And then there's Grandmother Grishy. She's been in the market all her life. Whenever I need guidance, she's always there to put me up to and my wife use the one who keep me right."

Over the years, Lewis needed strong support, especially in the beginning, after the Philadelphia fiasco. In the scenario he always envisioned, he would return to the ghetto, a conqueror — rich, famous and fancy. Instead, he returned a winner.

He couldn't believe it. Nor could his friends, and thousands of whom there were plenty. As a basketball bum, he had been favored over throughout his youth.



'I still want to play. I want the opportunity to go to training camp and work out daily. I don't mean to sound cocky but I'm out to prove I can play with anybody in the world. . . . After seven years of inaction, I'm sure I've lost some speed but there's plenty left. If I got the same opportunity as Magic and Norm Nixon, I know I can do just as well, maybe better.'

wrong. I admit I strayed at times and got involved in unproductive things. But we've done wrong at one time or another. I just thank God that each time my wife and grandmother were there to steer me out of trouble.

Lewis is on former ground now, regardless of whether or not the basketball campaign gets off the ground. "If I was gonna fall by the wayside, it would've happened by now," he says. "I have to come out. I'll have to do something else. Sometimes, I'll walk down the street and look out and see somebody has a house. Then I'll look right and see somebody has a house. I know they don't have those houses playing basketball. They're doing something. There must be something for me to do."

"To help himself carve out some kind of future, Lewis has renewed an old, junior high school friend with Charles Mims, a successful recording industry producer, musician, and management executive. As children, they made one of those blowing up. Mims must have figured he would some day ride Lewis' talents to stardom. It's a funny world, and now Mims is doing the helping.

If Lewis doesn't make it this time around, Mims will help him pick up the pieces of his life. Lewis realizes he may have to work for a living and he and Mims have discussed a future in sports representation. Lewis can't do "odd things" all his life. "We know we may have to do something," says Mims. "We've talked about it a great deal."

But the first order of business this summer is to arrange one more comeback. As Lewis representative, Mims has mailed out letters to each NBA team, informing each of Lewis' availability. Most teams sent replies, saying thanks, but so thanks. A few, however, expressed more than passing interest and promise to take a first-hand look at Lewis' condition during the summer. Mims is optimistic.

"Right now," he says, "I would say Raymond's chances of going to a training camp in the fall are good."

Typical of most clubs is the reaction expressed by Los Angeles Laker assistant coach Pat Riley. Riley's intrigued and says he'll probably watch Lewis play. Nevertheless, he doesn't expect it will take him a tryout.

He couldn't believe it. Nor could his friends, and thousands of whom there were plenty. As a basketball bum, he had been favored over throughout his youth.