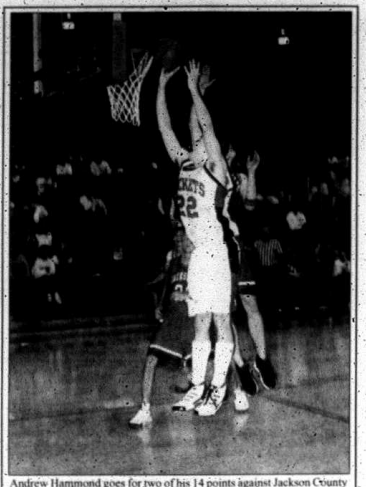
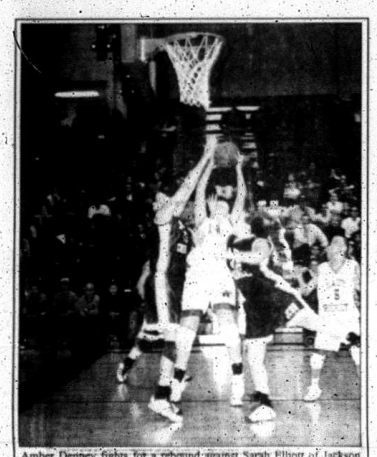
Heather Hammond, #31, sets a screen for Johnna Abney during the Lady Rockets 66-62 loss to All-"A" Champs Jackson County Tuesday night.



Andrew Hammond goes for two of his 14 points against Jackson County Tuesday night. The Rockets avenged an earlier season loss with a 73-59 victory for a 5-1 district record. The loss was Jackson County's first district loss.



Amber Denney fights for a rebound against Sarah Elliott of Jackson County. The Lady Rockets fought the Lady Generals to the end with a 66-62 loss. Also in the photo is #5 Jessie Hayes.

Lady Rockets scare Jackson but fall 66-62

It would have probably been the biggest win of RCHS girls basketball coach Chrysti Noble's career -- knocking off All-"A" champs and #3 ranked Jackson County -- but the Rockets fell just short, losing 66-62.

The Rockets played aggressive and focused throughout, battling back from a first half 12 point deficit to be down only 29-25 at the half.

Junior Ashley Mink put in a goal to begin the third period and senior Amber Denney got the last goal of the quarter to cut the Lady General's lead to 43-41 at the third quarter stop.

In the fourth quarter, it was the Johnna Abney, Tara Rowe show as the two freshmen combined to score 19 of the Rockets' 21 points with a basket by Rowe giving the Rockets their only lead of the game, 46-45 at the 6:59 mark.

But, sophomore Sara Elliot responded with 13 points, of her game high 27, to keep the Generals ahead.

The Rockets fell behind 62-57 with 55 seconds left to play and had to begin fouling. That was a problem in itself since they had only been whistled for one infraction to that point and had to foul five times to get the Generals to the free throw line where Leah Moore hit both shots. Rowe then put up a three and Abney added a basket for all of the Rockets scoring in the game.

Abney led the scoring for the Rockets with 17; Rowe had 14 second half points for a total of 16; Mink got 10; Hammond 6; Denney and Jessie Hayes 5 each and Amy Barnett 3.

The Rockets are now 0-4 in district play and 13-8 overall.

Rockets lose to Patriots by one; beat Jackson County

It was a bittersweet week for Rockets boys basketball -- the "bitter" came last Friday night at Lincoln Co. when the Patriots avenged an earlier season one point loss by defeating the Rockets 61-60 in overtime. The "sweet" part came Tuesday night when the Rockets handed Jackson County their first loss in district play 73-59.

Against Lincoln, the score was tied nine times and, if the Rockets had hit their free throws (11 of 25 total and 4 for 7 in overtime), the game would not have been in question.

The Rockets jumped out to an early 6-2 lead in the first quarter but the Patriots fought back to tie the score at 12 all at the end of the period. Junior Jason Reynolds drew first blood for the Rockets in the second quarter and senior Andrew Hammond followed with two more. However, the Pats came through to take the lead 19-18 before Hammond got his third straight goal to retake the lead for his team.

It was a seesaw battle through the rest of the quarter with Chris Settles, Aaron Anderkin and Aaron Cash all scoring and a fourth goal by Hammond giving the Rockets a 27-24 half time lead.

The Pats tied the score at 27 all to begin the third quarter and poor free throw shooting (1 for 5) for the Rockets really came into play with the Patriots going ahead 38-35 at the end of the period.

Lincoln Co. got the first basket of the 4th period to go up 40-35 but the Rockets then went on an 11-1 run behind 5 points by Hammond, 4 by Cash and 2 free throws by Anderkin to go up 46-41. But, the Pats came right back to tie the score at 46 all and retake the lead at the 2:38 mark. Hammond got the only other basket for the Rockets and Settles added a free throw to match the Patriots at 50 all and force the overtime.

The Rockets jumped out to an early 6 point lead with a three point play by Hammond and a three point goal by Reynolds. A foul on the Rockets and a Rocket turn-over gave Lincoln 4 points and it was 56-54 with 1:05 left in overtime.

Cash hit one of two free throws and Lincoln came up with the rebound. Reynolds knocked the ball lose to Cash and Devin Taylor was fouled with 23 seconds left. Taylor converted both for a 59-54 lead but the Patriots answered immediately with a three point goal with 12 seconds left. Cash was fouled on the next possession, converted one, to make the score 60-57 and Lincoln called a time out. With 11 ticks of the clock left, Lincoln set up for a three point shot. It went in and the Rocket defender was called for a foul. The Patriot made the free throw and Cash's shot, with 1.1 seconds left, rimmed out.

Hammond led all scoring with 24 points; Cash got 13; Reynolds 7; Anderkin 5 and Settles 1.

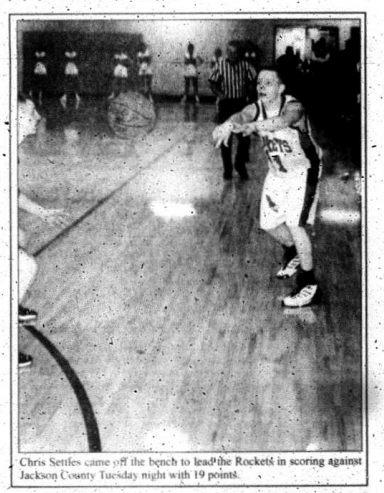
The Rockets played one of their best games of the season Tuesday night in defeating the Jackson County Generals 73-59. Junior Chris Settles, who did not shoot the first quarter, turned in a stellar performance, leading all Rocket scorers with 19 points, including going 6 for 6 from the charity stripe.

Jackson Co. got the opening tip off and converted an easy layup but that would be their last lead of the game until midway through the third quarter.

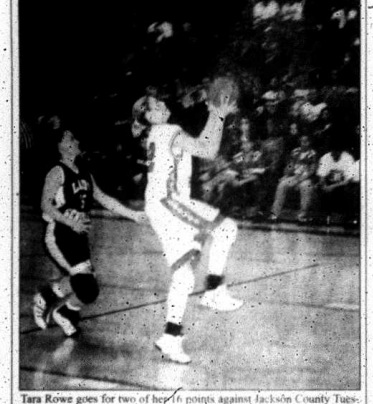
The Rockets led 22-13 at the end of the first quarter behind 9 points by Anderkin and Settles came through with 8 second quarter points to help his team to a 33-26 halftime edge.

But, the Rockets went cold in the third quarter and the Generals didn't, outscoring the Rockets 9-0 to go ahead 35-33. Cash finally stopped the bleeding at the 3:26 mark by hitting one of two free throws. Taylor followed with a three point basket and Anderkin hit a two to put the Rock-

(Cont. to A-9)



Chris Settles came off the bench to lead the Rockets in scoring against Jackson County Tuesday night with 19 points.



Tara Rowe goes for two of her 16 points against Jackson County Tuesday night. Rowe scored all but two of her points in the second half.

The Racing Reporter

By Gerald Hodges
The Racing Reporter

Bill Elliott says change is necessary to win

Bill Elliott will be going for another win in Sunday's Budweiser Shootout at Daytona International Speedway.

Winning a NASCAR Winston Cup race is the dream of every driver who straps on a helmet and takes his place behind the steering wheel. From Red Byron in 1949 to Jeff Gordon last season, but none of the previous champions have tried any harder to win races than Bill Elliott did in 2001, after winning the Daytona 500 pole.

But his biggest obstacle on the way to Victory Lane was accepting change.

Gordon had six wins on the way to his fourth title in 2001, and collected a whopping $5,872,273, the highest on record. When Elliott, the Dawsonville, GA native won his only Winston Cup championship in 1988, he also had six wins and claimed $1,574,639.

Elliott had not won a regular season race since 1994, and there were rumors of his retirement during last year's midseason. But that was before he won the Pennzoil 400 at Homestead, FL, Nov. 11. Suddenly all the critics became silent.

Elliott had given up his role as an owner/driver after the 2000 season and teamed up with Ray Evernham, former crew chief for Jeff Gordon. Elliott concentrated solely on driving, and it appeared to pay off, even if he didn't get a win until race number 34.

Elliott was back in Victory Lane, ending a 221-race dry spell.

"You get to the point that you think you could never win another race," said Elliott. "But you've just got to keep believing in yourself."

It had been a case of close, but no cigar for Elliott, even though he had several solid qualifying efforts during 2001, his finishes always seemed to be lacking.

"It took me six months into the season to realize I didn't have to worry about anything at the race shop any longer," said Elliott. "When I left th track on Sunday I could pretty much forget about it and come back the next Thursday or Friday.

"I feel like you've got to change to win. That's what's been the hardest for me the last couple years. The older you get, the harder it is to win.

To be able to change the way you build cars and learn how to drive differently is the key to success.

"I went through a period in '98 and '99 with that type mentality. 'We've got to run this or it ain't going to work.' Now it's 'You guys set it up and I'll try to give you feedback of what it's doing and we'll go from there.'"

Elliott, winner of 41 Winston Cup races has two more years left on his

(Cont. to A-9)

Brandon Fetin and Josh Brewer got into the Rocket spirit Tuesday night when the Rockets easily defeated Jackson County in a district game.

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