



B-BALLS SACRED GROUND

text: Seth M. Ferranti photos: Timothy Christmås

Good cops, bad cops, drug lords and snitches roam the streets of East Baltimore. In the gritty neighborhoods, drug dealers sit on the front steps and sell out the front door. The Baltimore police work hand-in-hand with the informants and under covers trying to unearth that next hood star and money-getting guy who got the game on lock.

B-more is a black man's world. The blacks are the politicians, the cops and the administrators. They are the wealthy, the poor, the gangbanging and the bourgeois. And for real, in the summer you can find them all at the Dome.

The Dome is the most unique outdoor basketball court in the United States. Spectators, hustlers, politicians and players have come from far and wide to see this unique setting.

Sitting in the heart of East Baltimore on North Eden and East Biddle Streets, the Dome is connected to the Madison Square recreation center. During the summer months, the court hosts three different leagues including The Craig Cromwell league. The league's namesake was a kid on Calvert Hall's national championship team who was shot and killed before the season started in 1982. Every high school team in the metropolitan area – including nationally known Dunbar High School – has a squad in this summer tune-up.

There is also the Baltimore Neighborhood Basketball League, which consists of AAU and recreation teams around the city with divisions for all ages up to 19 years. And finally there was the grand daddy of them all – Midnight Madness. These are the games where the hood stars, homegrown NBA players, college big shots and street legends come out to show their skills. Midnight Madness got so hype that they had to shut it down last year.

The tournament boasts a rich tradition of

notable players. From former Dunbar star and streetball legend Skip Wise – who was the only freshman to lead the ACC in scoring – in the 70's to the 80's – with Dunbar alumni and future NBA players Muggsy Bogues, Reggie Williams and Reggie Lewis along with hood stars like Big Spoon, Duke, Cosher and Tony Bunch. To the 90's – with homegrown B-more superstars and Division I players like Sam Cassell, Michael Lloyd, Kwame Evans, Keith Booth and Donta Bright. They shared the court with streetballers like Elbow, Muddow, Big Hop and Gloves. In the new millennium, you could see future NBAers Juan Dixon and Carmelo Anthony, college players like Mark Karcher, Kevin Braswell, Shawnta "Little Nut" Rogers, Kevin "Stink" Morris, Bootsy Thorton and Johnny Helmsley and several hood stars of the 21st century – including "DJ" Hairston, Beano, Big Zink, Big Vials, Colin "Get Up" Jones, Big Kofi, Lil' Geryl and Antwon Jennifer.

These are the names of the ballers that have rocked the Dome for the last three decades. Some of them have gone on to the NBA or the NCAA and won championships; multiple rings in the case of Sam I Am. Some of them have starred in college or been in and out of the league. Some of them never made it out of the hood and still others ended up drug addicts or in the feds doing football numbers.

The Dome is a staple of the city. Like Rucker Park to New York and everybody comes out for the games--the men, the women, the children and even the dogs and cats. Every young kid who balls in the city dreams of playing at the Dome. They come from all areas of Baltimore – E.A., Preston and Bond, Monument Street, Ashland Ave, Dukeland, Greenmount Ave and Lafayette projects – to try and compete with the city's finest.

The Dome is where Sam Cassell and



Pounded into the asphalt of Baltimore City playgrounds are stories of basketball greatness. Our boyz and girls can run with the best of them. We've seen powerhouse basketball players 'get' made here-in the gyms, parks, recreation centers, the Dome and under the lights at Cloverdale. Baltimore is Basketball and one man that stands out in the Book of B'More Ball is Mike Lloyd.

Mike Lloyd's story is what legends are made of. Hailed as one of the best to ever play, Mike graduated from Paul Laurence Dunbar High School ('92) and played for San Jacinto College ('92-'94) and Syracuse University ('94-'95.)

He was once prophesized as the next NBA Great, but instead played around the world with teams in Venezuela, France, Israel,

Carmelo made their bones. It's where they proved their heart and their games through sweat and tears, victories and losses. Before they shined on the national stage, they shined on the local one.

Skip Wise, Sam I Am, Carmelo, Muggsy, Reggie Williams and Juan Dixon are street certified legends in B-More who created their myths at the Dome. Their legends and feats live on to this day. During the last couple of years, the competition at the Dome has been dominated by one man – Michael Lloyd. He could have gone pro, but it was never to be. Instead he led a team of pros in the Midnight Madness tournament every year and usually won. His team, the Michael Lloyd team, has consisted of Carmelo, Marcus Hatten, Kwame Evans and streetballer Andre "Silk" Poole.

Other teams enter regularly too and give Mike Lloyd's squad a run for the title. Sam

Cassell usually plays with the T&M Lakers along with Spoon, Elbow and Glen Stanley. The Ashland Ave Runners have Keith and Donta Bright. The Project Boyz boasted prison legend "DJ" Hairston, Mark Karcher and Bootsy Thorton. You know Chocolate City always enters a team – the DC All Stars, who has Steve Francis, Curt Smith, Greg "The Wizard" Jones, Lonnie Harrell, Pep Tyson, Mike Gill and Big Mike Smith.

This past summer in lieu of the Midnight Madness at the Dome, Michael Lloyd's team won the PRO AM League Championship at Northwestern High School with Che' Evans, Kwame Evans, Kenny Purcell, Phil Dixon, and Mike Jones along with Juan and Carmelo as guest soldiers.

So in the summertime the Dome is jumping. The NBA players make their appearances and the street legends like Mike Lloyd hold it

down. The Dome is for real. They had those Rucker Park specials on BET and the And1 Tour was all over ESPN2. Even MTV did the Pee Wee Kirkland streetball special. When are they going to show the Dome some love?

You bet it will be soon. Ain't no secret no more. So BET, MTV, and ESPN2 get your cameras ready, go down to B-more and get it all the way gutter.

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Canada and the United States. His story could bring tears to the eyes of any b-ball loving, hometown rooting fan if the tale ended with him as a 'has been' but nah-Mike is a rebel. Today in 2005, at the age of 33, Mike Lloyd is the best on the courts of Baltimore and has solidly started another career as 'King of Street Ball.'

Awards/Achievements:

- McDonald's All-American - 92
- San Jacinto College's all-time record Point Total, Single Game (50) vs. Kilgore College - 93
- JUCO 1st Team - 93, 94
- Big East All-Rookie Team - 95
- USBL Rookie of the Year - 95
- USBL First Team - 98, 99
- USBL Champion - 99
- IBA MVP - 97-98
- IBA MVP - 98-99
- IBA First Team - 98-99
- IBA MVP Runner-Up - 99
- IBA Play-Offs MVP - 99
- IBA Champion - 99

MIKE LLOYD



Carmelo's HOOD Movement: 2013 Basketball Tournament

