

Columbia Defeats Penn, 88 to 84, And Ties Quakers for Ivy Lead

By GORDON S. WHITE Jr.

Columbia, which has not reached the National Collegiate basketball tournament in 10 years, played one of its stronger games since that season when the Lions outran and upset Pennsylvania, last night, 88-84, and gained a tie for the Ivy League lead with only one regular-season game remaining.

The surprising triumph, before a capacity crowd of 3,450 persons in Levien Gym, put Columbia within grasp of a berth in the N.C.A.A. playoffs just a decade after Jim McMillian and Heyward Dotson took the men of Morning-side Heights to the 1968 tourney.

Columbia and Penn are tied at 11 victories and two defeats in the Ivy League. Columbia plays Princeton at Levien Gym tonight, and Penn plays at Cornell in the regular-season finale. If both Penn and Columbia win they will meet in a playoff for the Ivy title and N.C.A.A. berth at Princeton Tuesday night. If Penn and Columbia lose there will be a three-way tie including Princeton, which beat Cornell last night and is a game back of the co-leaders. The issue can be settled tonight only if Penn wins and Columbia loses or vice versa.

3-Way Playoff Setup

In the case of a three-way tie for the Ivy title, there would be playoff games Tuesday and Thursday nights, with Princeton, Penn and Columbia drawing straws to see which one would get a bye into the Thursday showdown.

Sites for these games have not been determined.

Columbia scored one other big upset this season when it won at Princeton last month, 38-36, as the Lions played a tactical masterpiece of slow, deliberate basketball. The winning tactic then was the opposite of that last night when Coach Tom Penders decided to let his men run, run and run against the bigger, stronger Quakers.

It worked as Columbia added to its speed an amazing display of perimeter shooting from long range. Juan Mitchell, who dropped the ball in from all over the court, had 29 points. This was a career high for the junior from San Francisco.

But the play of the little man, Alton Byrd, and the rebounding at key points by Ricky Free were just as important for Columbia. Free had 10 rebounds, including two off missed Penn shots that kept Columbia in front during a thrilling finish.

Byrd Leads Running

Penders said: "I felt early last December that we would be in third place at this time and finish there. And then, when Byrd missed eight games, I felt third might be a high finish."

Byrd, who suffered a severely sprained ankle early in the season, was rested by Penders as much as he could last night. But that was only for a total of 5 minutes, and the 5-foot-8-inch guard ran for the other 35 minutes along with his speeding mates. Penn just couldn't keep up enough of the

time to get even after Columbia took a 7-point lead 8 minutes into the first half.

After taking a one-point edge at 13-12 for the eighth straight lead change in the fast-paced start, Columbia broke away by converting three consecutive Penn turnovers into baskets for 6 straight points and a lead the Lions never lost.

Penn got to within 1 point with 12 minutes remaining. But Columbia held fast as Free and Mitchell accounted for 6 straight points and got Columbia back into a safe lead. Then, with 2½ minutes remaining, Penn trailed by only 2. However, Free, who was benched a while with four personal fouls, came back to take off those big rebounds as Byrd converted the possessions into points, and Columbia had its big victory.

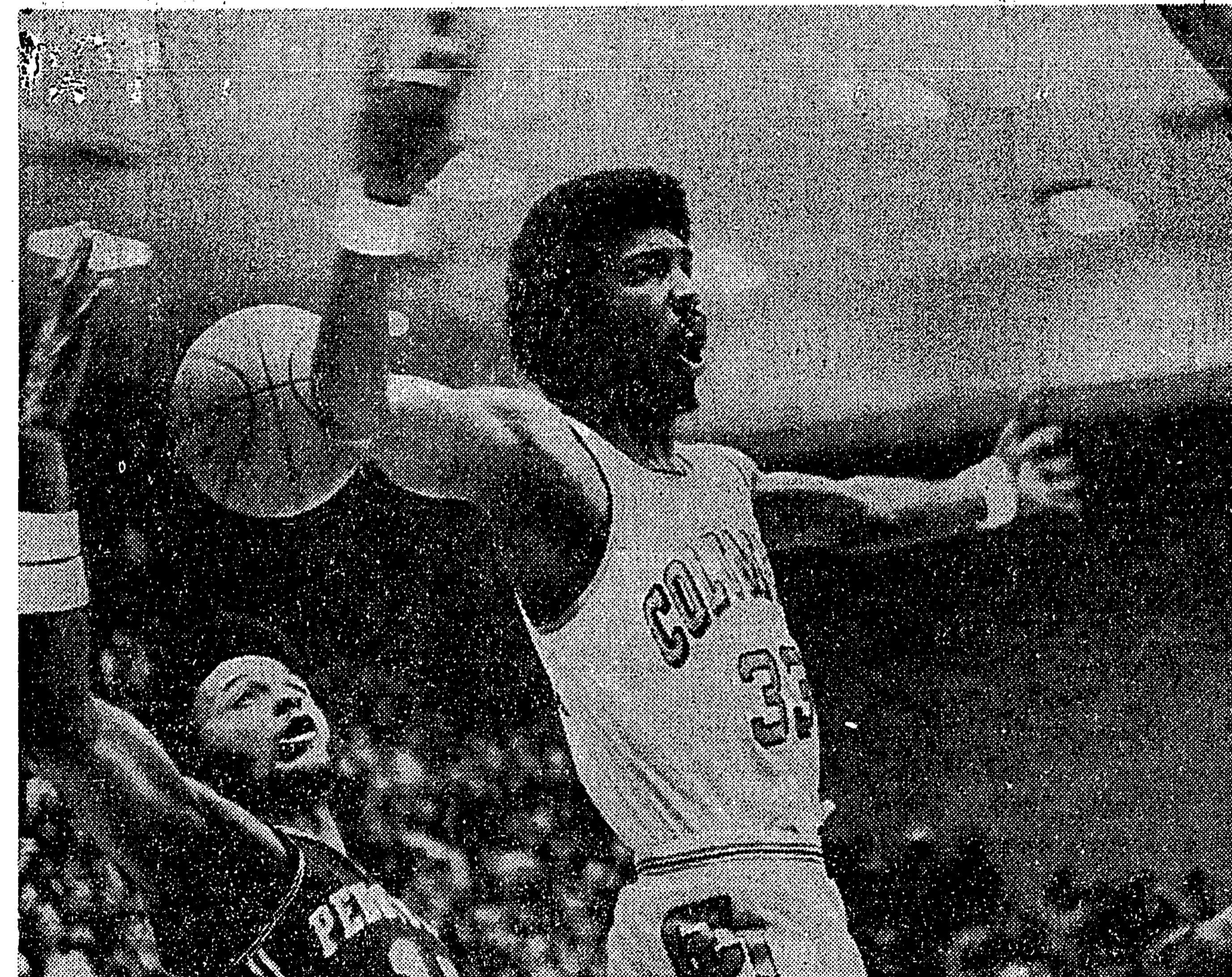
Lions Are Roaring

Columbia is in an amazing position considering that it began the season with only two victories in its first 10 games. Byrd missed the last four of those games, all of which Columbia lost.

Following that start, the Lions have won 13 of their last 15 games, including eight straight. Penn had beaten Columbia 17 straight times before last night.

Keven McDonald, probably the best player in the Ivy League, scored 23 points for Penn. But even he could not

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The New York Times/Larry Morris

Juan Mitchell of Columbia being fouled by Penn's Tony Price in the first half at Columbia last night

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The New York Times

Alton Byrd of Columbia driving by Penn's Tony Price for a layup in the first half at Columbia. Byrd was instrumental in the Lions' upset victory.

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overcome the unusually high 61.6 percent shooting of the Lions.

Penn had trounced Columbia, 81-58, the night after the Lions upset Princeton last month. Since then Columbia has not lost, and Penn might have been taken by surprise last night after such an easy triumph over the Lions only four weeks ago at the Palestra in Philadelphia.

Princeton, the defending champion, may still have a lot to say about the Ivy race in the finale of the regular season tonight. Pete Carril, coach of the Princeton team, is not going to be caught by a Columbia surprise twice in one season. Having to overcome the Tigers still gives Columbia a tough bat-

tle even for a playoff for the Ivy crown.

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