

Tar Heel Report Cards

By Charles Mills

Once again it is time for those dreaded mid-terms. As of this writing, the UNC men's basketball team is 17-3, ranked 7th in the country and first in the ACC. The Tar Heels began the season without All-American forward J.R. Reid, but managed to go 8-1 against some stiff competition. The Heels also came out playing a style of offense in which they were pushing the ball up the court and taking the first open shot. Since Reid's return, the team has gone back to a style reminiscent of past Tar Heel teams. Carolina suffered a 23-point loss at Virginia and the loss of senior point guard Jeff Lebo to an ankle injury, but rebounded with three big wins over its Big Four archrivals.

With 20 games played, Carolina has 11 more regular season games left, and potentially nine tournament games. So, as we pass the halfway point, the Heels receive a grade of B —.

Steve Bucknall—B: Buck has played like, well, Buck. He is consistent from game to game. He plays solid defense, scores 8 to 12 points a game, and dishes out a lot of assists. He has also shot the 3-pointer well, but inconsistency from the free throw line and turnovers could cost the team later one.

Pete Chilcutt—B: Chilcutt has attacked the offensive boards all season long. He has shown a nice 15-foot jumper and a jump hook. His problem has been catching the ball. All in all, he is performing well for a sophomore.

Rick Fox—B: Fox began the season scoring and dunking as if he were trying to make a statement. He did. He showed he is much better suited for Carolina's up-tempo offense as opposed to the multiple pass and punch-it-inside offense. He always finds himself in foul trouble. His role has decreased with the return of Reid.

Jeff Lebo—C: Lebo has to be one of the biggest disappointments ever to land in Chapel Hill. Sure, he has had big games in which he alone saved the Heels from defeat, but he has been directly responsible for a few, too. We never know whether Lebo-Hot or Lebo-Cold

is going to show up. When Lebo-Cold shows up, we might as well have Paul Hardin out there shooting jumpers. Lebo was predicted by many experts to be the best guard ever to play at UNC. Right.

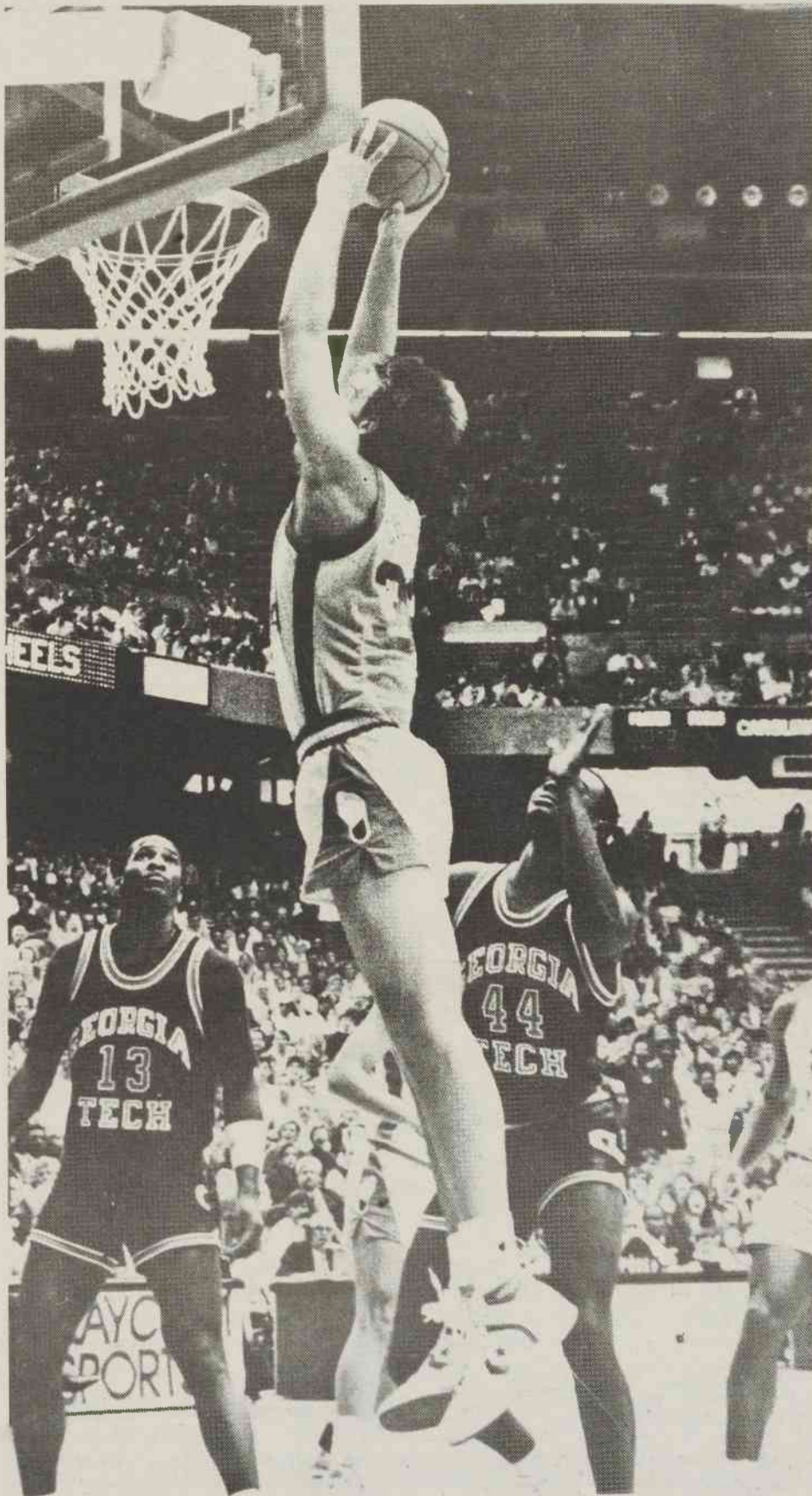
Kevin Madden—A-: This is the Madden Tar Heel fans have been expecting since Kevin left Robert E. Lee High School. Madden has been a scoring machine with dynamic dunks and an unstoppable turnaround baseline jumper. He has rebounded and block shots. His defense also has improved. His weakness is foul shooting.

J.R. Reid—B —: After last season, what can Reid do for an encore? He has gradually worked his way back into playing condition and looked like vintage Reid against Wake Forest. He is still the "Go-To Guy," and he will produce. Defense and foul shooting are still weak points, but I love his leadership.

King Rice—B-: I once called this man "a waste of a scholarship." Admittedly, Rice has played well during Lebo's absence. He even won ACC player-of-the-week. But one week does not a career make. He is going to have to prove it to me over the long haul. He is still a tentative shooter.

Scott Williams—B: Williams played well in the early part of the season before an ankle injury slowed him down. He then played a strong second half in UNC's emotional win over Duke. Some stupid mistakes against State tarnishes that, though. He is the team's emotional leader.

Dean Smith—A-: I have probably been Smith's biggest critic over the last three years, but I will admit he has done a good job this season. Losses against Missouri and Virginia were the kind of games where there is little a coach can do. The team should have been better prepared for Iowa's press, though. Smith has played a killer schedule and survived well. But then again, he is always the nation's best coach heading into February. The question is how will he perform own the stretch?



Controlled Ramblings

By Charles Mills

It's been a long time since I rock and rolled. Actually, it has been a couple of months since we last spoke. Originally, this space was going to be reserved for a really fantastic, Pulitzer Prize-caliber interview with UNC assistant basketball coach Phil Ford. Unfortunately, Coach Ford cannot appear until after the season, so I guess my Pulitzer will have to wait.

In the meantime, I must say that

the Tar Heels are making me look like a prophet. I called a big win over UCLA, the loss to Iowa, the win over Duke and a close win over State. It's a shame that my bookie . . . er, investment broker is currently incarcerated . . . I mean incapacitated for three to five.

Have you noticed lately that the seats behind the baskets in Smith Center have been filled with football

recruits? Did you ever wonder where all those seats that these high schoolers are occupying come from? Hint — Think students. Thanks a lot, Mack.

It occurred to me prior to Super Bowl XXIII that during one nine-year stretch, every winning quarterback wore number 12: Stabler once, Staubach twice, Griese twice, Bradshaw four times.

Do you want to know what I did over Christmas break? Besides eating. Besides watching TV. I read five whole books. Of course, they were all sports related, though. Check out this new book called *The Carolina Corporation*. It's all about Dean Smith and the basketball program, but it features incidents and quotes from yours truly. If you buy a copy, let me know, I'll sign it for you. Later.