

Women's teams showing balance not for men only

By SCOTT PETERSON

THE Atlantic Coast Conference men's coaches stress the balance and competitiveness of the league each year at preseason. This year, coaches in the women's league are doing the same thing, but it's a first for them.

The reasons: N.C. State All-America Genia Beasley, a tower of strength at 6-foot-2, has graduated as have teammates Ronnie Laughlin at 6-1 and 6-5 key reserve June Doby. At Maryland, the Terrapins' only loss was to have been 6-5 center Krystal Kimrey, but that was before 6-4 backup Kris Kirchner decided to transfer.

The key losses in the front lines of the only two teams to ever win the ACC women's title, plus strides in recruiting by North Carolina, Virginia, Clemson and Wake Forest, should provide the women's league with the same kind of intensity and balance that have been characteristic of the men's.

Graduation losses depleted the front line of Kay Yow's defending ACC champion Wolfpack, but Yow hit the recruiting trail and signed five key recruits, including three Parade All-Americans. Ronda Falkena, a 6-8, 195-pound center, attracted the most attention, but will not step into a starting role immediately. Defensive ace Claudia Kreicker will, however, at either pivot or strong forward.

Because of the heavy losses from State's double-pivot offense, the Pack attack will shift to the perimeter where forward Trudi Lacey, an All-America last season, will be the key. Ginger Rouse, the team's best pure shooter, will return after

sitting out most of last year with a back injury, as will guard Angie Armstrong. Armstrong set the single-season record for assists at State last year with 136.

Maryland has also been forced to switch from its inside game to a running game. The Terps, ranked sixth nationally last year, have a strong backcourt with all-ACC performer Debbie Lytle returning for her second season at guard. Two 6-1 players also return in sophomore Jasmina Perazic and junior Lydia McAlily. Maryland's freshman prize is 6-2 high school All-American Belinda Bearman, who scored 24 points and grabbed 17 rebounds per game as a high school senior.

LAST year was the winningest season ever for Clemson, who advanced to the Women's National Invitational Tournament with a 24-12 mark, and the only loss to the Tigers was point guard Bobbie Mims. Coach Annie Tribble found a suitable replacement in freshman Celia

Slater of Clearwater, Fla. Slater, 5-9, will team with Mary Ann Cubelic, also 5-9, in the backcourt.

Barbara Kennedy, Clemson's scoring leader the past two years, anchors the front line at forward and will be joined by 6-1 center Sheila Cobb.

While the arrival of Ralph Sampson may have overshadowed any other basketball news coming out of Charlottesville last year, the Virginia women won 20 games for the first time ever (20-12) and appeared in its first post-season tournament, the WNIT.

The Cavaliers return their entire starting lineup and have beefed up their bench with prize recruits to face a schedule that includes five of the eight quarter-finalists in last year's AIAW tournament. Chrissy Reese, a 6-1 sophomore, returns at center and is flanked by senior forwards Jackie LaBerge and Valerie Ackerman. The Wahoo's leading scorer, Melissa Mahony, is back at swing guard with sophomore Jill McKone quarterbacking Virginia at the point.

Coach Debbie Ryan landed 6-0 Linda Mitchell last spring to fill in at forward. Mitchell, a Parade All-America, averaged 28 points and 14 rebounds during her prep career and was rated as one of the top five forwards in the country as a senior.

At Wake Forest last year, coach Wanda Briley had to recruit a field hockey player and two golfers just to scrimmage. Things look somewhat brighter for Briley this year thanks to 10 new faces — a junior transfer and nine freshmen.

The new faces, however, are not guaranteed starting roles as the Deacons return six players from last year's squad. Junior Patty Brink will return at point guard with a 5-6 freshman Ellen Duchesne the top candidate for the other guard spot. Duchesne participated in the McDonald's All-American Classic last year.

BARBARA Durham, the Deacon's leading scorer last year at 25 points a game, and Janet Gleason fill the forward spots. The center position is a toss-up between 6-2 Anne Sheridan, 5-11 Barbara Buchanan and 6-0 Vickie Leidner, all freshmen.

Duke coach Debbie Leonard also recruited height, allowing several players to return to their natural positions as the Blue Devils seek to better last year's 14-13 mark.

Discounting Leonard's recruits, the tallest Duke player is 5-10, but freshman Heather Conway, a 6-2 Adidas All-American as a prep, steps into the center position as the tallest woman ever to play basketball at Duke. Freshman Stacy Hurd will play strong forward allowing senior Barb Krause to move to small forward.

Sophomore Patti Thomasson returns at the point and senior Tera McCarthy and sophomore Margo Walsh will battle for the No. 2 guard spot.

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