

Al Wood has difficult first year, adjusts to life in professionals

By KURT ROSENBERG
Staff Writer

Al Wood came back to Chapel Hill last week.

He's been gone less than a year, and though the memories of last season's NCAA semifinal game may not be razor-sharp, neither have they faded completely. It doesn't seem that long ago that Wood electrified the basketball world, dissecting the Virginia Cavaliers' defense with a 39-point outburst that propelled North Carolina into the 1981 championship game.

Has it been a whole year? It has, at least as far as the calendar is concerned.

But for Al Wood the past 12 months have at times felt like an eternity. It's been an extremely long and often frustrating first season in professional basketball, and Wood has no regrets that it is finally over.

His performance in the semifinals against Virginia meant more than just the opportunity to play for a national title. It also raised more than a few eyebrows around the NBA, causing



Al Wood

"There was no doubt in our minds that he would develop into a great player," Needle said. "We just couldn't wait that long."

Literally, the Hawks could not afford to wait that long. Atlanta is not one of the richer NBA franchises and paying Al Wood \$400,000 a year while patiently waiting for him to reach his potential was something the Hawks did not feel they were in a position to do.

In Atlanta Wood was never able to adjust after missing those very important first few weeks. One wonders what might have been if the injury had not occurred.

"If that shoulder hadn't have given him trouble I think he'd still be in Atlanta," said Dean Smith, Wood's coach for four years at UNC. "I expected Al to be on the all-rookie team, but you can't forecast injuries."

If he had remained healthy with the Clippers Wood just might have had a shot at the all-rookie team. But misfortune continued to plague him.

Wood was beginning to come out of his shell and earned a starting role. On

Feb. 13, against Denver, he pumped in 19 points, his career high. Three days later, he scored 25 against Atlanta. Two days after that, Wood had 26 against Indiana.

But in that game he sprained an ankle when he landed the wrong way. It caused him to miss the next five games. Wood was in and out of the lineup after returning, playing for small stretches until his ankle forced him to sit again.

Still, he fought back; on March 23, against San Antonio, he scored 14 points in 15 minutes. Then, in a game with Los Angeles April 1, Wood was setting a pick for teammate John Douglas when the two players collided. Wood sustained a stretched ligament in his right knee. His first season was over.

"It's been pretty disappointing for me," he said. "The whole season's been up and down, up and down. I had some real good games, then I would get hurt. It was tough getting all the injuries."

The injuries notwithstanding, Wood's mid-season move cross-country did wonders for his game, as well as his psyche. "I love it out there," he said. "It's a real nice city. And anytime you can get playing time you're going to be happy."

Averaging 24 minutes a game in San Diego, Wood was given a chance to prove himself, unlike in Atlanta. He responded to challenge. Finding his range from the outside, Wood shot 52 percent from the field for the Clippers (compared to 34 percent with the Hawks) and hit 80 percent of his free throws. After the trade he averaged 12.5 points over 29 games.

"There's nothing wrong with Al that being healthy won't cure," Smith said. "It's hard to project whether he'll be an all-star player or just a solid 10-year pro, but I think he's going to go on to have a fine career."

But for now Al Wood just wants to relax. He's back in Chapel Hill, enjoying himself and renewing old friendships. It's been a wearisome year—the injuries, the trade, not to mention playing for a 17-65 team.

He cannot be completely disappointed, though. But if he's dissatisfied with his first pro season, a glance at the final NBA statistics might make him feel a little better. In 23 games with the Atlanta Hawks, Freeman Williams had a field goal percentage of .382 and scored 4.8 points a game—ironically, the exact average that Wood had in Atlanta.

Al Wood, it seems, has the last laugh.

Daily makes final year worthwhile

It was over. As the UNC baseball team crowded onto the field to celebrate their 12th inning 3-2 ACC tournament victory over Virginia, senior catcher Tom Daily took one look at his catcher's mitt, and then arched it high in the air. No one watched the mitt as it tumbled and fell unnoticed to the grass.

"It was the most awesome thing to ever happen to me," Daily said two days later. "At times I questioned what I was doing, but it was worthwhile."

After three years as a bullpen catcher backing up the likes of Scott Bradley and Todd Wilkinson, Tom Daily, a Morehead scholar from Naugatuck, Conn., had to wonder if it was all worthwhile.

He "just showed up" one day in the fall of his freshman year and spoke to junior varsity coach Mike Fox, made the team and spent the next two years alternating between the JV squad and playing for North Carolina in the Summer League.

When not playing baseball, the business major made the most of his Morehead opportunities, taking summer jobs in Winston-Salem his freshman year and Raleigh in his second year. By the time he was a junior, Daily decided he had had enough of North Carolina and scooted to Sacramento, Calif. for the summer break.

When he returned for his senior year, Daily found Scott Bradley had joined the New York Yankee organization. And although Wilkinson caught in the first few UNC games, he was moved to the outfield early in the season. Daily's competition for the starting job became freshman Tim McGee.

Until the Wake Forest game on March 31, McGee had a lock on the starting job. But coach Mike Roberts started Daily at

Winston-Salem to bolster the line-up, and against Davidson three days later, he grabbed three hits.

"I don't hit the ball extremely well," Daily said. "I just try to do what's needed to get the ball moving."

Daily said that he enjoyed working with the young UNC pitching staff best, thinking about which pitch to call, charting every ACC batter and controlling the tempo of each game.

"Pitchers are pretty weird creatures," Daily said. "You've got to know how to handle them when you go out to talk to them."

Daily played the game of his life against Duke — the last regular season ACC game of the season — when he went three-for-four including the first, and last, home run of his college career.

And now as that career comes to a close, Daily will travel to Europe courtesy of the Morehead Foundation to study various American foreign embassies on the continent. He then plans to forsake the baseball field for law school, either at UNC or the University of Connecticut. He graduates with the Walter Rabb award for most improved player, and he goes with a lot of memories.

"If I had gone anywhere else, I would not have had a chance to play," Daily said. "The biggest thing is all the good people I've met — the guys, the coaching staff. They're all great."

"Now I'm just going to travel and talk to people."

If this season is any indication, Tom Daily will make Europe all worthwhile.

— By S.L. PRICE

UNC teams notch banner seasons

By DRAGGAN MIHALOVICH
Staff Writer

Move over, Notre Dame and UCLA. Carolina is now recognized as having the top football and basketball programs in collegiate sports. For the second year in a row, the Tar Heels finished in the Top Ten in both of the major sports, and this season Carolina won the elusive national crown in basketball.

Football started conspicuously enough as all eyes were on this inexperienced group. Too many eyes, in fact, as the infamous East Carolina spy caper, which must have been concocted by Jethro Bodine, was snuffed out by a former Tar Heel who was studying in the Law Library. It didn't matter anyway as Kelvin Bryant said hello to the 1981 season and goodbye to the "Spirates" with a six touchdown performance. The Tar Heels added two more scores for good measure on the way to a 56-0 romp.

Weeks two and three saw Kelvin add nine more touchdowns as Carolina began to draw more national attention. Sports Illustrated was ready for a cover story on Kelvin when injustice came — Astro-turf and a disabling knee injury. Initial reports were not encouraging, but Bryant would return late in the season, probably one game too late.

Without Bryant UNC won, but not in the same spectacular fashion. Wake Forest's ineptness and an N.C. State on-side kick helped out as the Tar Heels moved to 6-0 and a number three ranking in the polls.

But it was too good to be true. South Carolina spoiled all the major bowl talk. And it didn't help that quarterback Rod Elkins and practically the entire defensive secondary joined Bryant on the sidelines.

Undefeated Clemson came into Kenan Stadium ranked second, and the vaunted Tiger defense cancelled all Tar Heel reservations to Miami. Bryant made a dramatic return, but with a tender knee he was not enough to prevent a 10-8 loss.

Bryant would eventually gain 1,000 yards, a tremendous feat considering he only participated in five full games. It was Bryant and freshman tailback Ethan Horton that led Carolina to its third straight bowl win, a 31-27 triumph over Arkansas in the Gator Bowl.

By the time the fog rolled in during Carolina's moment of glory in Jacksonville, most of the attention was on the basketball team. There was something special about Dean Smith's 21st team, a feeling that this could be the year. Both wire services thought so as they crowned the Tar Heels pre-season favorites.

Carolina enjoyed one of the greatest Decembers in college basketball history as they swept through an arduous schedule with relative ease. The high point came the day after Christmas when UNC baited Kentucky in East Rutherford, N.J. for the top spot in the polls.

Many observers felt that Kentucky deserved the number one ranking. Right. The Wildcats left with their tails between their legs after an 82-69 UNC stomp.

One week later Virginia haughtily invaded Carmichael to challenge the Heels'

claim to the top spot. The surprising Cavs almost won too, but Jim Braddock's free throws preserved Carolina's perfect record.

The next Wednesday night in obnoxious Reynolds Coliseum, Carolina exploded in the final 10 minutes of the game to wipe out State, 61-41.

There was the inevitable mid-season downswing. Wake Forest took advantage of Sam Perkins' illness to hand the Heels their first loss, and Virginia was perfect in their 74-58 conquest of the slumping Tar Heels.

But the Heels would not lose again. One reason was the play of James Worthy, who became more aggressive on the offensive end of the floor. Worthy couldn't be stopped one-on-one, and when the smoke cleared the Heels had tied for the ACC regular season title and had captured the ACC tournament crown.

After escaping unheralded James Madison, UNC played some of its best ball of the season in downing Alabama and Villanova for the Eastern Regional championship. Jimmy Black and Matt Doherty were particularly effective.

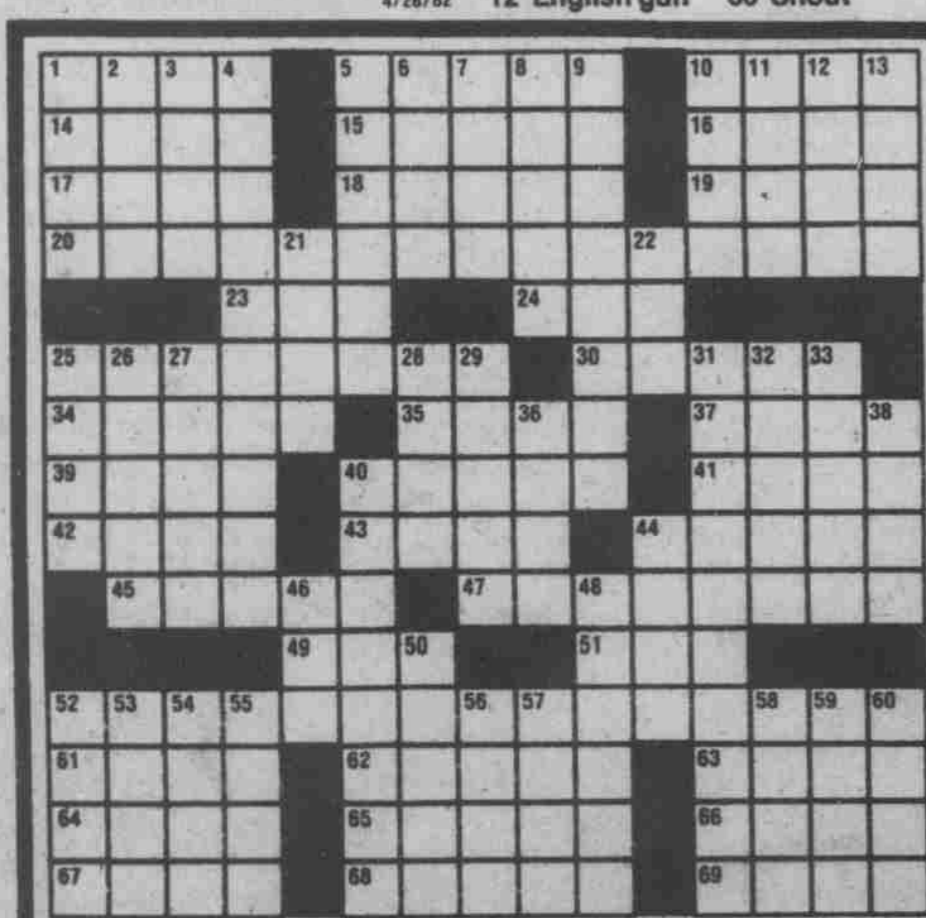
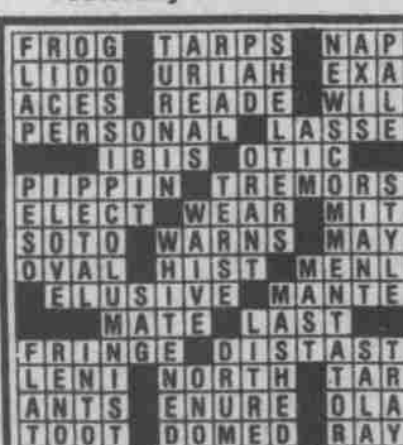
Houston was just the preliminary as Perkins' 25 points led Carolina into the finals. Black held Houston star Rob Williams without a field goal.

Georgetown stood in the way of a national championship — and a big obstacle they were. But Worthy personally removed the big monster with an assortment of jump hooks, flying dunks and divine intervention.

THE Daily Crossword by Stanley B. Whitten

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|------------------------|---------------------------------|--------------------------|------------------------|
| ACROSS | 34 Willow | 51 — minute (soon) | 13 Rowboat items |
| 1 Lie adjacent to | 35 Corrida animal | 52 Flower | 21 Bleaching agent |
| 5 Tax for mailing | 37 Table scraps | 61 Assam silkworm | 22 Indian |
| 10 — facto | 39 Getz or Kenton | 62 Like a weak old woman | 25 Entertainer |
| 14 Aureole | 40 Straight-edge | 63 Not on time | 26 Prevent legally |
| 15 Heep | 41 Embossment | 64 Prayer ending | 27 Climbing plant |
| 16 Moreno or Coolidge | 42 Come — good (end in failure) | 65 More scarce case | 28 Tulletry |
| 17 Japanese aborigine | 43 Feels bad | 66 White House office | 29 Puppets |
| 18 Wireless | 44 Depart | 67 Disagreeably moist | 31 Flower |
| 19 Roman road | 45 Page of music | 68 Kefauver | 32 Vision |
| 20 Flowers | 47 Played (a guitar) | 69 Type of flower | 33 — off (forestall) |
| 23 Pronoun abbr. | 49 Corrida cheer | DOWN | 36 R.I.P. word |
| 24 Harbor: covered | | 1 Fictional captain | 38 Coaster |
| 25 Defensively covered | | 2 Bucket, of a kind | 40 Price of train ride |
| 30 Flocks | | 3 Arm bone | 44 Moon |
| | | 4 Flower | 46 Also |
| | | 5 Most confident | 48 Streams |
| | | 6 Shallow container | 50 Lab burners |
| | | 7 Assistant | 52 Be ahead |
| | | 8 Domestic helpers | 53 "My Friend, —" |
| | | 9 Morning star | 54 Legal holding |
| | | 10 Flower | 55-Jerk |
| | | 11 Cordage fiber | 56 Trumpeter |
| | | 12 English gun | 57 Robt. — |
| | | | 58 Volcano output |
| | | | 59 And others: Lat. |
| | | | 60 Shout |

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can promo

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