

No. 1?

At UNC, the faces change but the wins keep coming

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The players come and go. Al Wood. James Worthy. Jim Braddock.

They come to North Carolina, help their team win a ridiculous percentage of games, and leave. When they're gone, someone else is there, waiting to do it all over again.

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— Dean Smith

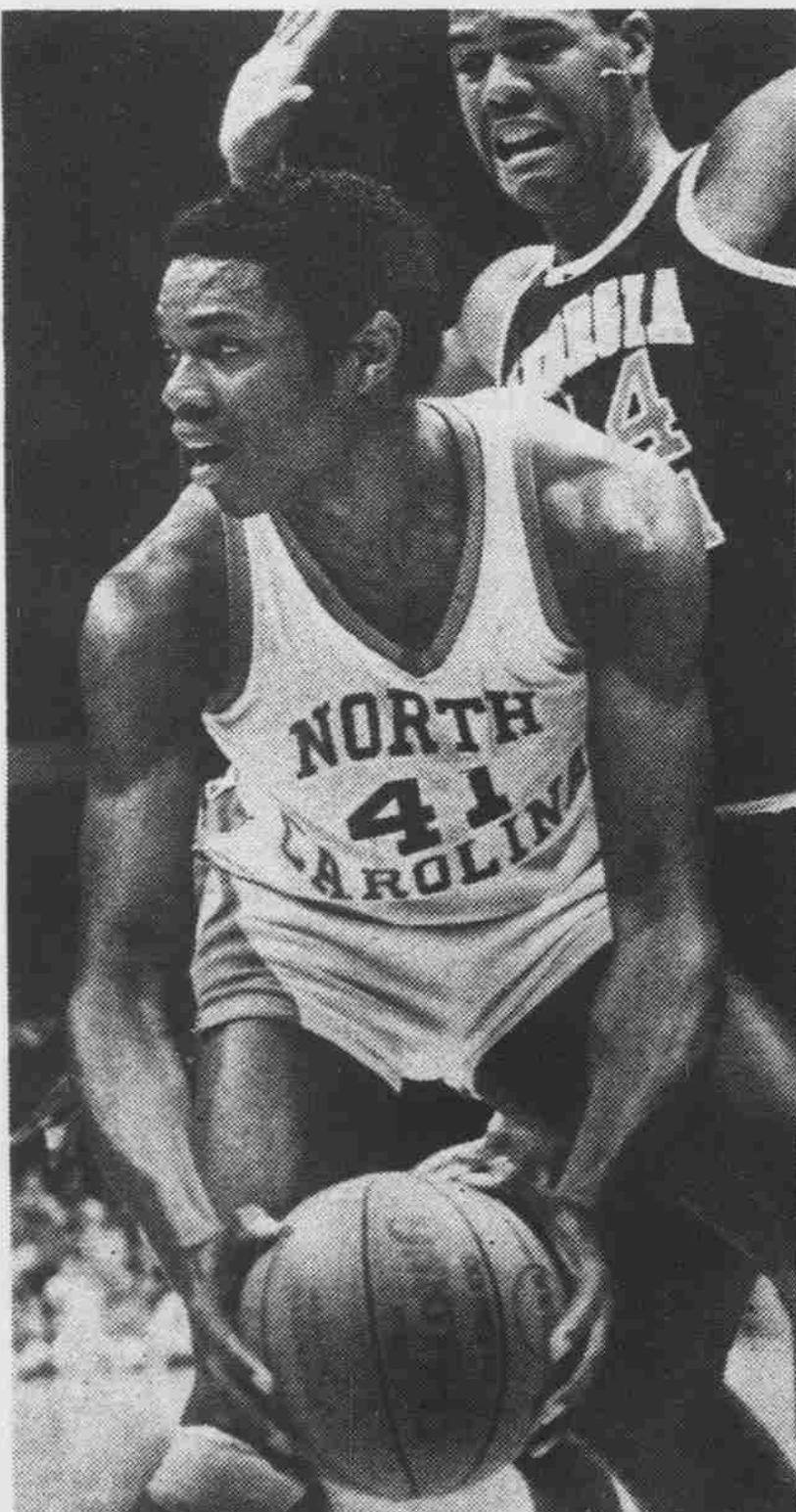
A mystique few understand surrounds Dean Smith and his entire program. Don't bother trying to figure it out. Just label it The System and leave it at that.

Once again, North Carolina has one of the most powerful teams in the country, and most of the preseason predictions said the Tar Heels were No. 1. On paper, the choice was logical. On instinct, it was only natural. The Tar Heels have been to the NCAA finals twice and the final eight once in the last three years. So the No. 1 ranking comes as no surprise — not to the fans, and not to the players.

"They put us sky-high each year," senior Sam Perkins says. "The ranking is just another thing."

Dean Smith has grown more used to it than anyone. But it is something the UNC coach could live without.

"None of the preseason top four teams (last year)



Scoring, defense, rebounding and shotblocking are all part of Sam Perkins' consistent game.

made it to the Final Four," Smith says. "The No. 1 ranking gives everyone too high expectations. But then, there's always high expectations here."

The expectations are justified this season and no one can argue with that. Opposing coaches will search carefully for UNC's weaknesses. They'll be hard-pressed to find any.

Experience. The Tar Heels have plenty of it. Sam Perkins and Matt Doherty are seniors and Michael Jordan and Buzz Peterson are juniors. They've been through enough to be able to provide stability and keep things running smoothly, but then again, things *always* seem to run smoothly in Smith's system.

Depth. The starting five — Jordan, Perkins, Doherty, Peterson and sophomore Brad Daugherty are solid, and there's help waiting on the bench whenever it's needed. Junior Warren Martin, at 6-11, is a capable backup for Daugherty at center, and 6-10 freshman Joe Wolf could also step in and help. There's 6-9 freshman Dave Popson and 6-5 senior Cecil Exum at forward and if that's enough, the guard position is the deepest on the team.

Sophomore Steve Hale and freshman Kenny Smith are behind Peterson at point guard, and it looks like each can handle the position. And sophomore Curtis Hunter could blossom this season at the other guard position, though he's missed a lot of practice because of a broken foot he suffered during the summer.

There has been some question about the point guard position. But really, the question seems to be who will play the most there, not how well it will be played. Peterson has recovered from the knee injury that sidelined him from the middle of last season until late summer. His outside shooting and experience give him the advantage over Hale and Smith, but the other two also have their strong points. Hale is easily the best man-to-man defensive player among the three, and Smith the best at running the break, which became obvious during the two Blue-White games, when he showed his ability to roar downcourt and either dish the ball off at the least second or rattle the backboard with a fancy dunk.

"I'm confident that Peterson, Hale and Smith could all be very good," says Dean Smith.

Confidence isn't even the word to describe the way Smith feels about Jordan, Perkins and Doherty. It's a blatant understatement. Each of the three is a given. Each proved himself his freshman year, and barring injury, each will have the kind of season North Carolina is counting on.

Smith on Jordan:

"He's the prototype big guard. I can't think of a better 6-6 player, offensively or defensively, in the country."

He's not the only one who can't. Jordan averaged 20 points and 5.5 rebounds a game last year, made 53.5 percent of his field goal attempts and had 76 steals. He did everything, including winning *The Sporting News* National Player of the Year award. Can he get any better? Yes, according to Smith.

"Michael continues to improve," the coach says. "The thing he must guard against is that no one man can win basketball games. You can't do it alone, and I think he's always understood it. He's just got to guard against it."

Expect Perkins to do the same things on the court that he did last season — just about everything. He moved to forward last season after playing two years at center and was his usual self, scoring (16.9 points a game), rebounding (9.4 a game), blocking shots, playing good defense. Night in and night out.

"Sometimes it's easy to take him for granted because he's been so consistent," says Smith. "He's always ready to play and that shows his maturity."

Doherty led North Carolina with 150 assists last season and scored 10.5 points per game. His levelheaded play and sound defense mean a lot to the Tar Heels, though he probably doesn't get the credit he deserves. People harped on his poor shooting (only 43.8 percent from the field), but Smith isn't worried about that part of Doherty's game.

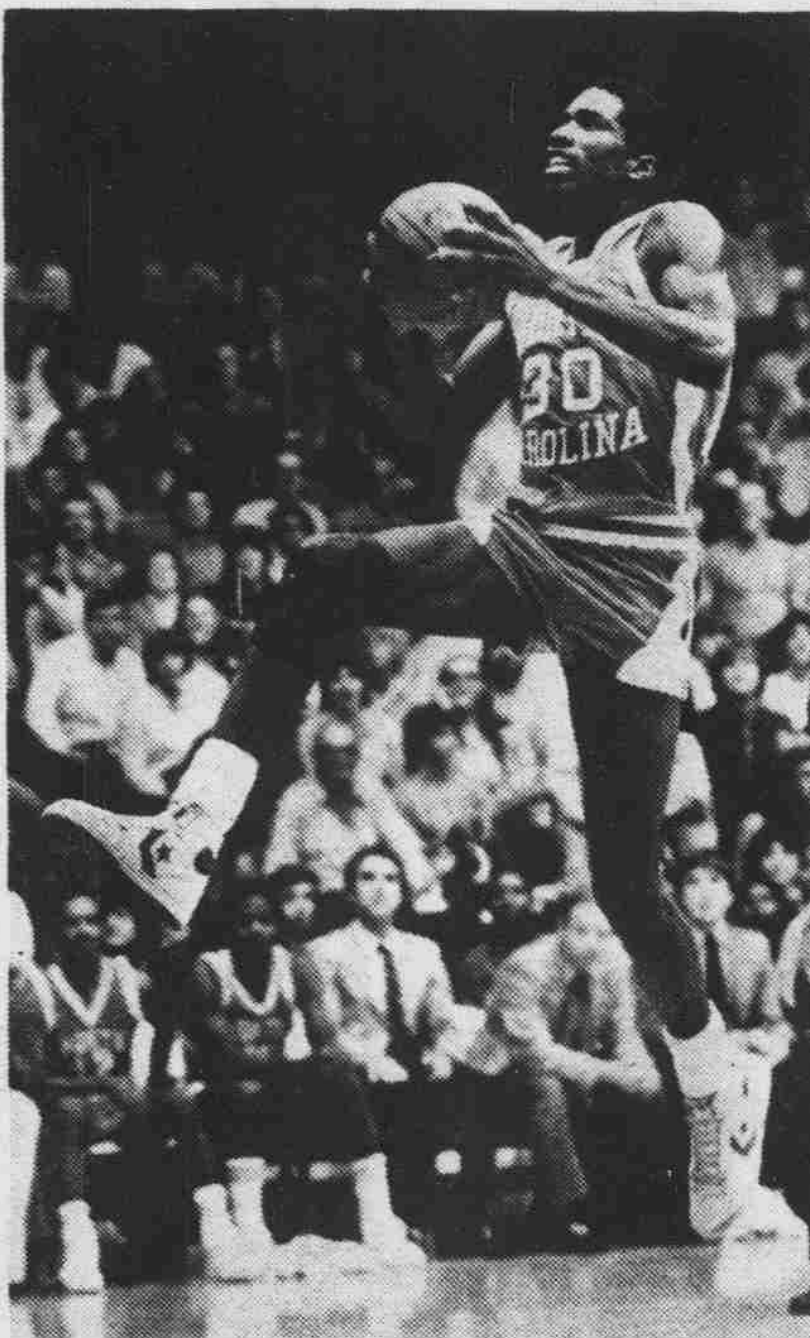
"Matt had a great year last season, even though he didn't shoot as well as he's capable," he says. "His field goal percentage doesn't bother me because I know that with his work habits, it will improve."

Improvement is also the key word for Daugherty. He will get better, there's no doubting that. He got a lot better over the course of last season, moving into the starting lineup in UNC's 11th game. As a freshman, he averaged 8.2 points and 5.2-rebounds, but he appeared

tentative and must be more aggressive. He knows it, and as a result, the 6-11 sophomore, only 17 years old, has come back this season determined to get better.

"I have a lot more confidence," he says. "I know a little bit more about what's going on."

What's going on in Chapel Hill this season is a basketball team that seems to have what's needed to win the



Swift freshman Kenny Smith could see a lot of action at point guard this season.

ACC championship and possibly much more. Smith, as always, exercises verbal caution — the never-say-you're-that-good approach he is well known for. But in his players, there seems to be a quiet confidence telling them that yes, this could again be the year.

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Says Doherty: "I think we have everything covered." Preseason rankings may be meaningless. Smith is only hoping they are as meaningless as they were two seasons ago.

NORTH CAROLINA TAR HEELS

No.	NAME	HT/WT	CLASS	HOMETOWN
42	Brad Daugherty	6-11/240	So.	Black Mountain, NC
44	Matt Doherty	6-8/210	Sr.	East Meadow, NY
50	Cecil Exum	6-6/206	Sr.	Dudley, NC
25	Steve Hale	6-3/178	So.	Jenks, OK
43	Curtis Hunter	6-4/190	So.	Durham, NC
23	Michael Jordan	6-6/189	Jr.	Wilmington, NC
51	Timo Makkonen	6-11/202	Jr.	Lahti, Finland
54	Warren Martin	6-11/240	Jr.	Axton, VA
20	Cliff Morris	6-3/193	Jr.	Durham, NC
41	Sam Perkins	6-9/224	Sr.	Latham, NY
22	Buzz Peterson	6-3/185	Jr.	Asheville, NC
35	David Popson	6-9/195	Fr.	Ashley, PA
30	Kenny Smith	6-3/170	Fr.	Queens, NY
24	Joe Wolf	6-10/222	Fr.	Kohler, WI