

## Jordan adjusts to new position

By MICHAEL PERSINGER  
Sports Editor

GREENSBORO — Midway through the second half of last Thursday night's Olympic basketball exhibition, 6-foot-6 North Carolina guard Michael Jordan replaced Chris Mullin of St. John's for the Olympic team.

"Hey, Michael," Jordan's UNC teammate Sam Perkins called to Jordan, now waiting near mid-court for the Washington Bullet's Frank Johnson to shoot the second of his two free throws, "who have you got?"

"James," Jordan called back, referring to former Tar Heel James Worthy, who after his performance in this year's NBA championship series against the Boston Celtics is recognized as an NBA star in his own right.

That brought a smile from Worthy, who's 6-9 and one of the NBA's best power forwards. But Jordan was able to hold his own against Worthy, on both ends of the floor, completing his transition to forward in Olympic coach Bob Knight's tenacious man-to-man system.

Jordan insists that the transition wasn't difficult, and if his performance in Greensboro was any indication, Jordan is capable of hanging with any player he wants — regardless of their size.

Jordan finished the evening with 25 points, including 19 — many of them from the high post

— in the second half. He added eight rebounds and three assists while not committing a personal foul in 26 minutes. In short, Jordan took over.

"I wouldn't say 'take over,'" the always modest Jordan said. "I was getting a lot of garbage baskets and a lot of layups. My role is to get inside and penetrate and hit the open man. 'It's no different from what I did at UNC.'"

Well, maybe only a little different. Guarding the likes of Worthy in the NBA is a little different from chasing Spud Webb and Terry Gannon around the perimeter in the ACC. Still, Jordan is up to the task and said the experience will help prepare him for the future.

"I'm getting adjusted to it (playing forward)," Jordan said. "I'm playing against a lot bigger guys, and I think I have an advantage over them in quickness. It's preparing me for what's going to happen in the NBA, because I'm going to have to play a little small forward and play against bigger guys."

"I feel comfortable with it and I think I can produce at small forward," Jordan said. "Wherever I can help the team, I'm willing to do it."

Jordan said that it was Knight's decision to move him to the high post — a decision made to give Jordan more room to operate.

"In practice I'd been penetrating and hitting the open man, and

he (Knight) decided to put me up top where all the action is," Jordan said. "Whenever I get the opportunity to penetrate and pass then I go ahead and do it, and when I have the shot I take it."

"It's something that I enjoy doing, and I feel really comfortable doing it."

Jordan said that defending against bigger men inside was where he was still having problems.

"A lot of the big guys can shoot from the outside, and I'm used to guarding people on the outside," he said. "My weakness is guarding the bigger man inside, so I just have to front him and keep him from getting the ball as much as possible, and hopefully I can get help when I need it."

He certainly has the personnel behind him to provide the help. Patrick Ewing, Wayman Tisdale, Joe Kleine, Jon Koncak, Perkins and the rest of the Olympic front line form a strong backbone for Knight's man-to-man.

But just because Knight's pressure defense is supposed to lead the Olympians to the gold medal in Los Angeles, Jordan said that the only pressure to win will come from within.

"I know the American people want us to win, and we want to win, too, but we are not going to let the American people dictate our style of play," Jordan said. "We don't want to live up to their expectations. We want to set expectations of our own and start

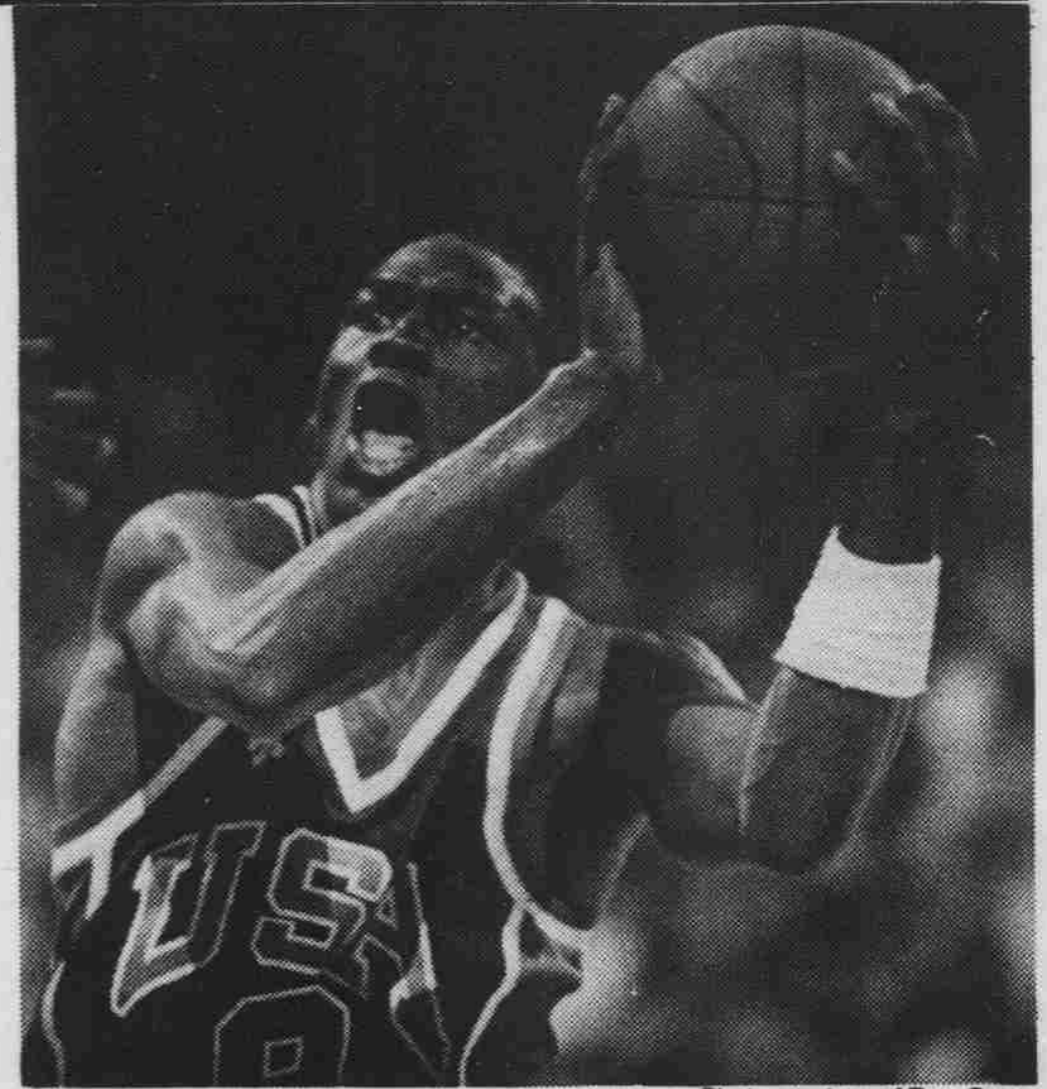


Photo courtesy of Tom Green

Michael Jordan, now part of US Olympic team

from there."

Where Jordan plays after the Olympics will not be in North Carolina, but with the Chicago Bulls. Jordan gave up his final year of eligibility to turn professional. So, with Jordan coming back to North Carolina to a warm crowd clad in lots of Carolina blue, the question had to be asked; does he regret his decision?

"When I made my decision to go professional, I always said I wouldn't look back and say, 'I

wish I'd stayed,'" Jordan said. "I'm happy with my decision, but I know I'll be missing out on a lot of things and a lot of tradition at UNC. But I felt I accomplished a lot when I was at UNC, and I can afford missing those things."

If Jordan's Olympic and professional career are anywhere as successful as his collegiate one, you can be sure that he will be able to afford almost anything.

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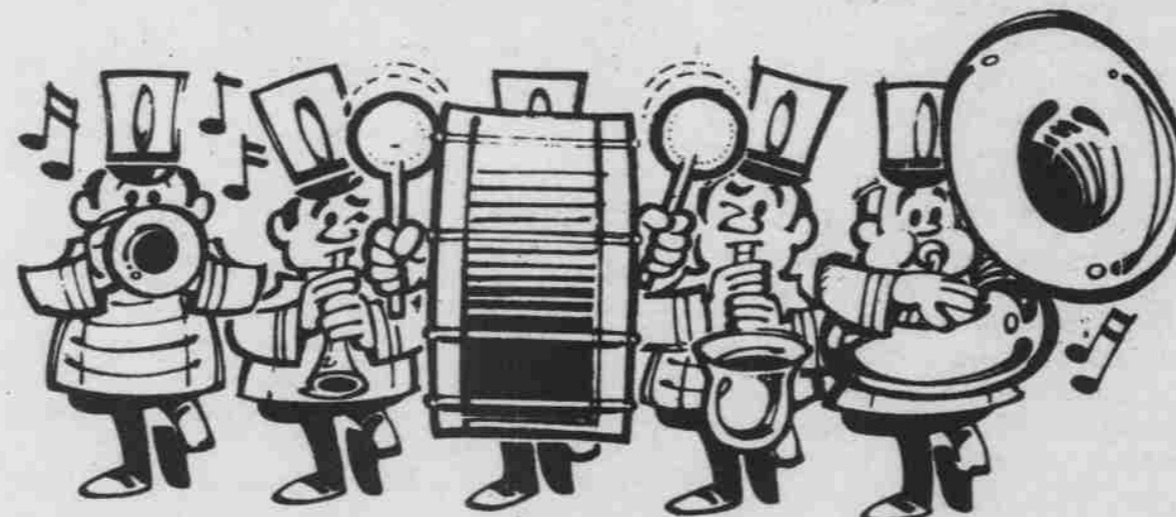
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