

Hale is making presence felt in backcourt

By MIKE SCHOOR
Staff Writer

Who is this Steve Hale character and why is he doing such nasty things to UNC statistic sheets and endangering front-row spectators in the nouveau riche basketball kingdoms of Japan, Hawaii and Florida?

In the six Tar Heel games during their two-week World Tour, Hale scored 83 points, passed out 30 assists and grabbed 28 rebounds. The 6-3 junior is now averaging 11.3 points and 5.6 assists per contest, while shooting 57 percent from the floor and 91 percent from the line.

Enough with the numbers. Hale won't make All-American. But he will be first team All-Floorburn.

Hale runs, shoots, dives, leaps and defends with a blue collar flair. In Miami, it was Hale banking home his lefty jumper, windmilling FSU guard Maurice Myrick into a five-second violation and crashing to the floor of the Knight Center after a let's-both-hit-the-deck-hard collision with 6-6 Jerome Fitchett. Characteristically, Hale picked himself up, made certain his head and neck were joined, and sank two free throws to give UNC a 50-49 advantage.

However, there was one Miami moment that symbolized Hale's commitment to hustle and sacrifice for the team. With 5:34 remaining and UNC ahead, 61-55 — thanks to four points and a steal by Hale in the previous two minutes — the Seminoles missed four short-range shots in one sequence. UNC's Brañ Daugherty rebounded. His outlet pass for Hale was tipped, sending Hale on a fly pattern out of bounds.

After the game, UNC coach Dean Smith laughingly said when Hale went sprawling to the floor, he believed he just had to give him a breather, no matter that Hale never signalled to come out.

"Steve played a gutty game; he does that all the time," said Smith almost nonchalantly, illustrating that Hale's hustle was no revelation.

Could you be more specific, coach?
"Steve plays awfully hard."



Hustle: despite impressive offensive numbers, Steve Hale may be even better on defense.

Tour

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ing the games often didn't really seem to understand what was going on. The cheerleaders imported to the games held up cue cards telling the fans when to cheer and wave their pompons, resulting in the fans watching the cheerleaders more than the games.

"The fans made a big deal over the cheerleaders," Morris said. "They liked them an awful lot."

"The only things they cheered of in the games were slam dunks and long jumpers," Peterson said.

"One fan commented in the paper that she didn't know what was going on but she liked the cheerleaders," Morris said.

Being away from home at Christmas was the low point of the trip for most of the players. "There were a lot of Buddhists over there, so no one really cared about Christmas," Peterson said. "That took some spirit away from some of the guys. It didn't seem like Christmas."

"It was my first Christmas away from home," Morris said. "I missed my family and friends, but I think it brought the team closer together because we substituted each other for family."

The team tried to have as American a Christmas as possible. One of the people who traveled with the Tar Heels dressed up as Santa Claus, handed out candy, and the team sang carols.

But it still wasn't the same as being at home. "I got homesick at Christmas," Popson said.

It was an odd Christmas for more reasons than just being away from home. At 10 p.m. on Christmas night, the team left Japan and flew to Hawaii, gaining about 19 hours in the process and arriving in Hawaii at 9:20 a.m. Christmas Day again. "That was really weird," Ranzino Smith said.

Coming back from practice that night, the Tar Heels played a Christmas wish game in which they each told one

thing they would wish for. "Kenny wished for a big car, a house, and lots of money," Morris said. "Most of us did wish for material things. I wished for acceptance into medical school."

The team spent nearly a week in Hawaii, with snorkeling the high point of the week, Morris said. "We'd get some bread and tread water and crumble it up and the fish would come up and eat it right out our your hand," Morris said. "They were big fish, too."

Hawaii wasn't exactly the sunny paradise Morris expected. "It rained the first two days were there, and when it stopped our schedule got hectic. I think that pretty much the team enjoyed Japan better."

Jet lag also began to be a problem for the Tar Heels. "It was draining, doing all that traveling," Smith said.

"I was asleep in the afternoon and couldn't sleep at night," Peterson said.

But Hawaii was a dream come true for Smith, notwithstanding the jet lag. "We went to the beach, and the atmosphere was great. It was my dream to go to Hawaii, because I used to always watch Hawaii Five-O on television."

The team played its final game overseas on Dec. 30, and the players flew home immediately afterwards to be with their families.

"I was really glad to get back home," said Morris. "We only got to spend five days out of the break at home, it's usually more than that. Everybody was really glad to get off the planes."

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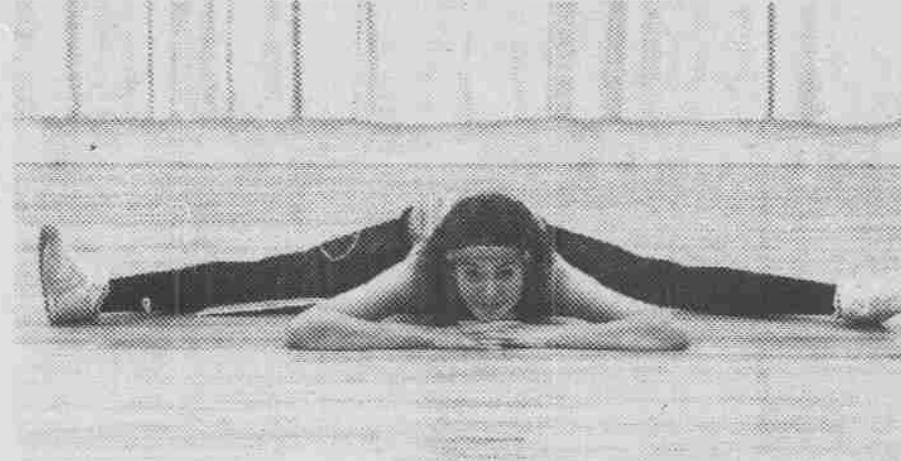
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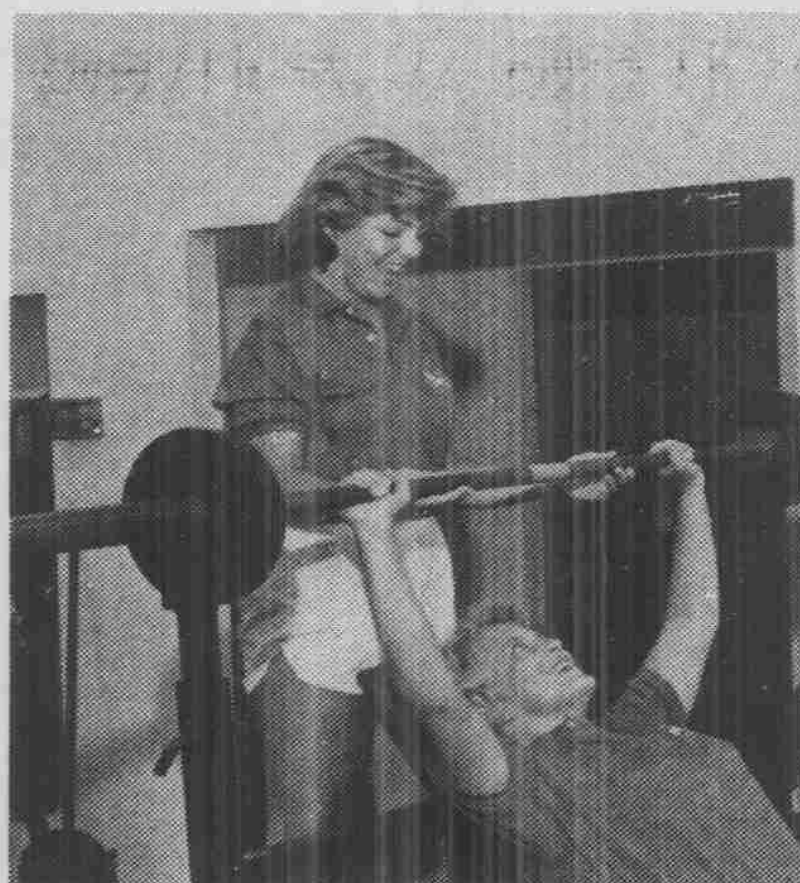
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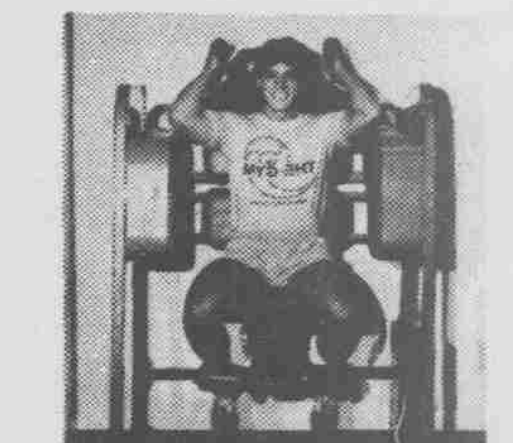
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