

Even off-season, Dean Smith has his work cut out

By **EDDY LANDRETH**
Sports Editor

Since basketball is a winter sport, how does a college basketball coach spend his summers?

According to North Carolina head coach Dean Smith, most of the summer is spent working. "July is our recruiting month," Smith said. "We're on the road a great deal."

One reason for this is the many camps and all-star games that occur in the summer, with future college stars on display. Smith said this type of event enables the coaching staff to cut down on the trips to assess new talent.

Sandwiched between several stacks of papers, Smith noted the work that literally stood before him. "We've kinda become a public relations arm for the University," Smith said. "So many people write in and come by. We have three secretaries and need four."

Also, June is the month when Chapel Hill is descended upon by a hoard of children, hoping someday to wear North Carolina on their chests. This event is known as the Carolina Basketball Camp, and although assistant coach Bill Guthridge basically operates the camp, Smith does lecture to the young hopefuls.

Smith said the camp makes him more nervous than the games during the regular season because "I feel responsible for their health."

Of course, the regular season requires a great deal of time from a coach. "A lot (of coaches) have gotten out because you don't get a Sunday off," Smith said.

However, he said, he feels he has been able to strike a workable balance between work and his family. "I don't over-work."

In the last few years it has become popular among certain television announcers, such as Dick Vitale, to claim that Dean Smith selects recruits. In other words, he can merely choose his incoming freshmen from year-to-year.

"I think it's funny when they say we select," Smith said. "It would save a lot of trips if we could. Last year we visited 10 homes and only got four of them (prospective players)."

This year's group has been highly publicized. J.R. Reid has virtually

been crowned the king of college basketball and he hasn't played a game yet. Smith said he is pleased with this group, but they have yet to prove themselves.

"We're very happy with our freshmen group, but they are prospects," Smith said. "There isn't anyone who is sure-fire."

And what does Smith look for in a prospect? "We look for kids who will be good representatives of the University, in addition to being basketball prospects," he said.

A player is considered a prospect, Smith said, until he plays against players older and more experienced than himself.

Another aspect of recruiting college athletes is the cheating that occurs in many programs.

Smith said one way to prevent cheating is not to tell anyone who you're trying to recruit. He said this is one method he uses at Carolina.

But, Smith added, "Our alumni are very proud of the fact that we haven't cheated and won't." This lessens the possibility of wealthy alumni attempting to bribe a player.

The Atlantic Coast Conference as a whole, Smith said, is a very clean league, and it seems to occur on a league-to-league basis. If one team is cheating and winning, then others will begin to follow — the keeping-up-with-the-Joneses syndrome.

One possible remedy, he said, is to punish both the player and the coach. Declaring a player ineligible would be a tough decision, he added, but if players understood the consequences, it may make a difference.

Freshman eligibility is a subject Smith said he feels deeply about. He said he believes there is a chance now the NCAA may repeal the rule allowing freshmen to compete.

Freshmen were made eligible in 1972.

Freshmen, he explained, need a year to adjust to college life before undergoing the rigors of big-time college sports. This would also solve many of the problems with grades, since athletes would have a year to prove themselves academically on a collegiate level.

The reason it may pass, he said, is the higher entrance standards for freshmen now in effect, which are rendering some good athletes ineligible for their first year. Now, schools who may have opposed the rule before are suddenly saying "maybe we should make all freshmen ineligible," Smith said.

During the past few years, television announcer Dick Vitale has become like a recording, sounding the wonders of Dean Smith, with such blurbs as, "Deany baby, you're the greatest." Smith rarely gets to view these moments of worship

because North Carolina is on the court. He said he did have the opportunity to witness one such worship session on tape and thought, "please let up."

Smith said he later talked to Vitale. "I asked him to let up, that all the other coaches will be mad," Vitale responded, "I just say what I feel." And probably added, "But you're Mr. Basketball, Deany baby."

Coaching college basketball was not always Smith's goal. "I thought I was going to be a high school math teacher, football and basketball coach," he said.

Then, he said, he was offered a graduate coaching position at the University of Kansas, where he played baseball, football and basketball. The basketball team won the NCAA championship in 1952 and finished second the next year.

He came to UNC in 1958 and became head coach in 1961 when Frank McGuire left for the National Basketball Association. During his career at the University, his teams have won the NIT and the NCCA championship. In 1976, he coached the U.S. Olympic team to the gold medal in Montreal.

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