

UNC kids should be 'alright'

By JAMES SUROWIECKI
Assistant Sports Editor

The kids are alright. At least Dean Smith hopes so.

For a coach who has been traditionally hesitant to use his freshmen in anything more than supporting roles, 1986-1987 should prove an interesting experiment. UNC was ravaged by graduation, losing center Brad Daugherty (20.2 points a game), hard-nosed defensive guard Steve Hale and post man Warren Martin.

So the Dean of Tobacco Road went out and brought back some reinforcements in the rather large persons of J.R. Reid and Scott Williams. And although he can put up an eminence front designed to protect his youngsters as well anyone in basketball, Smith must be looking to the frosh as keys this year.

"This squad, I can tell, already will be overrated," Smith said at Picture Day. "Most of that comes from recruiting writers. All I can say is that by March I do hope we get some help from our freshmen."

If the Tar Heels want to stay at the top of the polls, which Smith cares nothing about, and if they want to make a return trip to the Superdome, which he cares everything about, the freshmen must develop quickly. In the meantime, the two men on the hot spot for UNC are seniors Joe Wolf and Kenny Smith.

Smith, the flashy point guard who knows all about being a highly-touted rookie, averaged 12.0 points a game last year while shooting 51.6 percent from the field. This year, he will be called on to score more, to be the team leader. For a star at UNC, everything comes back to expectations, to the pressure of being one of the best. No one knows what's it like behind blue uniforms.

Wolf is in a similar position. This will be the breakthrough season for the 6-10 Kohler, Wis., forward with the sweet turnaround jumper and the disguise of anonymity. The question "Who are you?" has become "How good are you?" In Wolf's case, the answer should be "very", although you'll never hear it from his lips.

"When I got here and watched him work, I said this guy is really, really good," Jeff Lebo said after Wolf had 28 points in the second Blue-White game. "I think he's so underrated. He's one of the top forwards in the country by far."

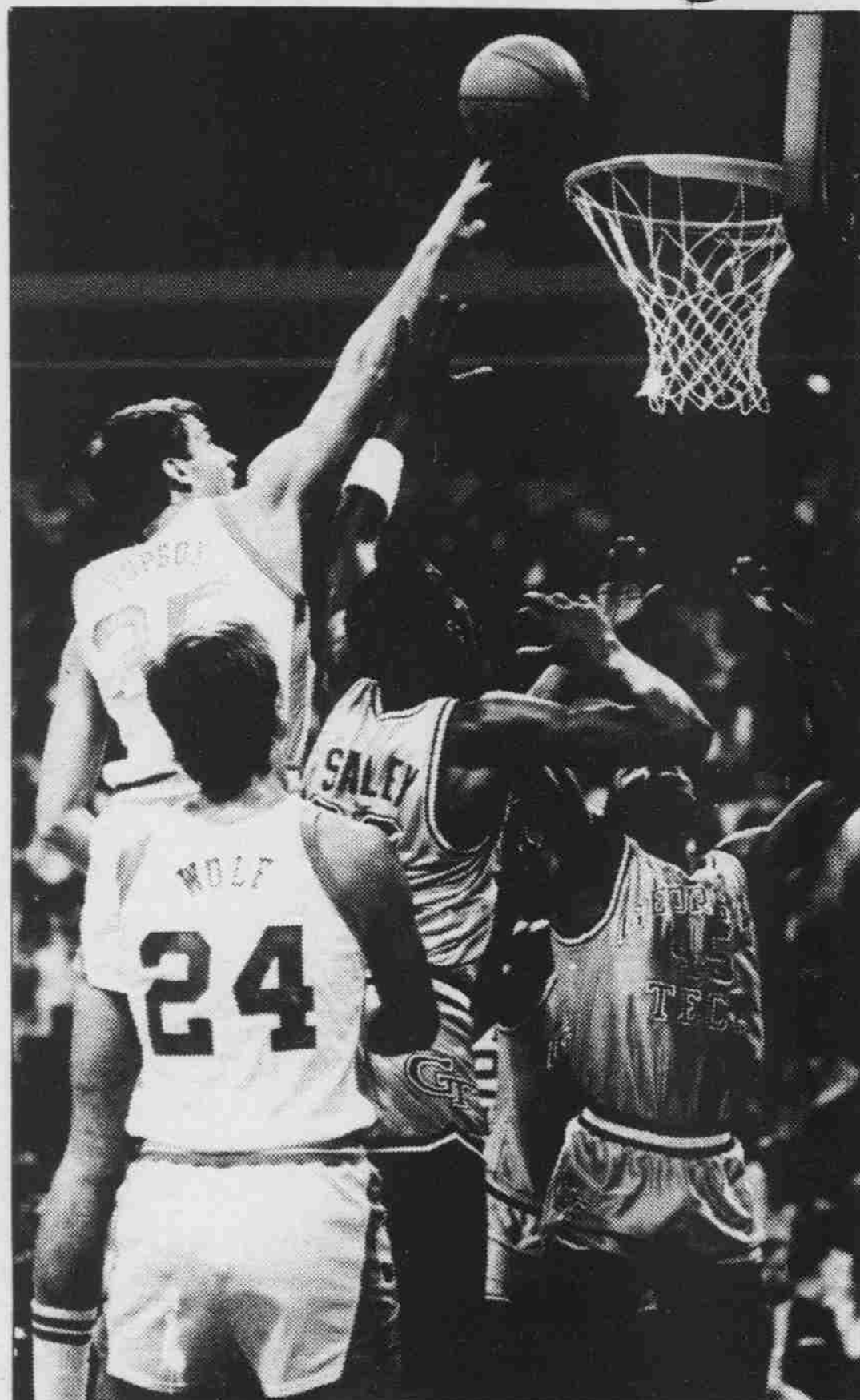
Lebo, he of the soft jumper and the unbeatable fundamentals, is the team's other sure thing. He worked his way into the starting lineup by the end of last year, and finished the season with a 9.2 ppg average. If he progresses as everyone expects, it's hard to envision a tougher pair of guards in the country.

It's ironic, then, that the backcourt is the one place where depth is a real question mark.

Chapel Hill native Ranzino Smith has earned the reputation of "Instant Offense" and may contribute this year, particularly with the advent of the three-point rule. But he is not a point guard by any stretch of the imagination, which means Lebo and Kenny Smith are the only players truly capable of running the team. That worries the Dean.

"We do have a problem if either Lebo or Kenny gets hurt or gets in foul trouble," he said. "It's really my fault. You probably won't find another program in the country that doesn't have a third guard who can bring the ball up against pressure."

Returning to the three-point rule,



Joe Wolf (24) and Dave Popson will be counted on this season

North Carolina Roster

Forwards						
No.	Name	Hgt.	Wgt.	Age	Class	Hometown
20	STEVE BUCKNALL	6-6	210	19	So.	London, England
32	Pete Chilcutt	6-8	225	18	Fr.	Eutaw, Ala.
34	DAVE POPSON	6-10	210	21	Sr.	Ashley, Pa.
34	J.R. Reid	6-9	245	18	Fr.	Virginia Beach, Va.
Centers						
45	Marty Hensley	6-10	211	19	Fr.	Marion, N.C.
42	Scott Williams	6-9½	215	18	Fr.	Hacienda Heights, Calif.
24	JOE WOLF	6-10	235	21	Sr.	Kohler, Wis.
Guards						
3	Jeff Denny	6-4	185	18	Fr.	Rural Hall, N.C.
43	CURTIS HUNTER	6-4½	193	23	Sr.	Durham, N.C.
14	JEFF LEBO	6-2	180	19	So.	Carlisle, Pa.
21	MICHAEL NORWOOD	6-2	180	19	So.	Carlisle, Pa.
30	KENNY SMITH	6-3	165	21	Sr.	Queens, N.Y.
33	RANZINO SMITH	6-1	189	20	Jr.	Chapel Hill, N.C.

CAPS Denote Lettermen

in Kenny Smith and Lebo UNC has two players for whom the line is painted just right. Their shooting will loosen up the rough boys in the middle and give Wolf some room to maneuver.

"In our thinking, we will have a couple of set plays for the three-point shot," Smith said. "If it's open, they should take it."

As for seniors Dave Popson and Curtis Hunter, you might call them the won't get fooled again kids. Both were built up in high school and neither has done as well as people thought they would. Now no one really expects anything from them. This is their last chance to make an impact. And Popson, at least, may

surprise.

The team will not. When you're ranked No. 1 in the country, surprise is no longer a part of your vocabulary. And when you also happen to be North Carolina, finishing your season with anything but a Final Four appearance is unacceptable.

The last time the Tar Heels reached the promised land was in 1982, in New Orleans, when a freshman hit the jumper that won it all. This year, the Final Four returns to the city on the Mississippi. The omens, at least, are good. So is the talent. If Reid is starting by the end of the year and everyone stays injury-free, will the Tar Heels be heading to Louisiana? You better, you better, you bet.

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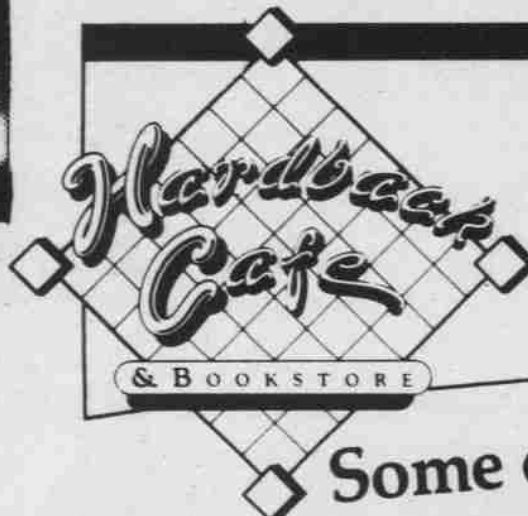
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