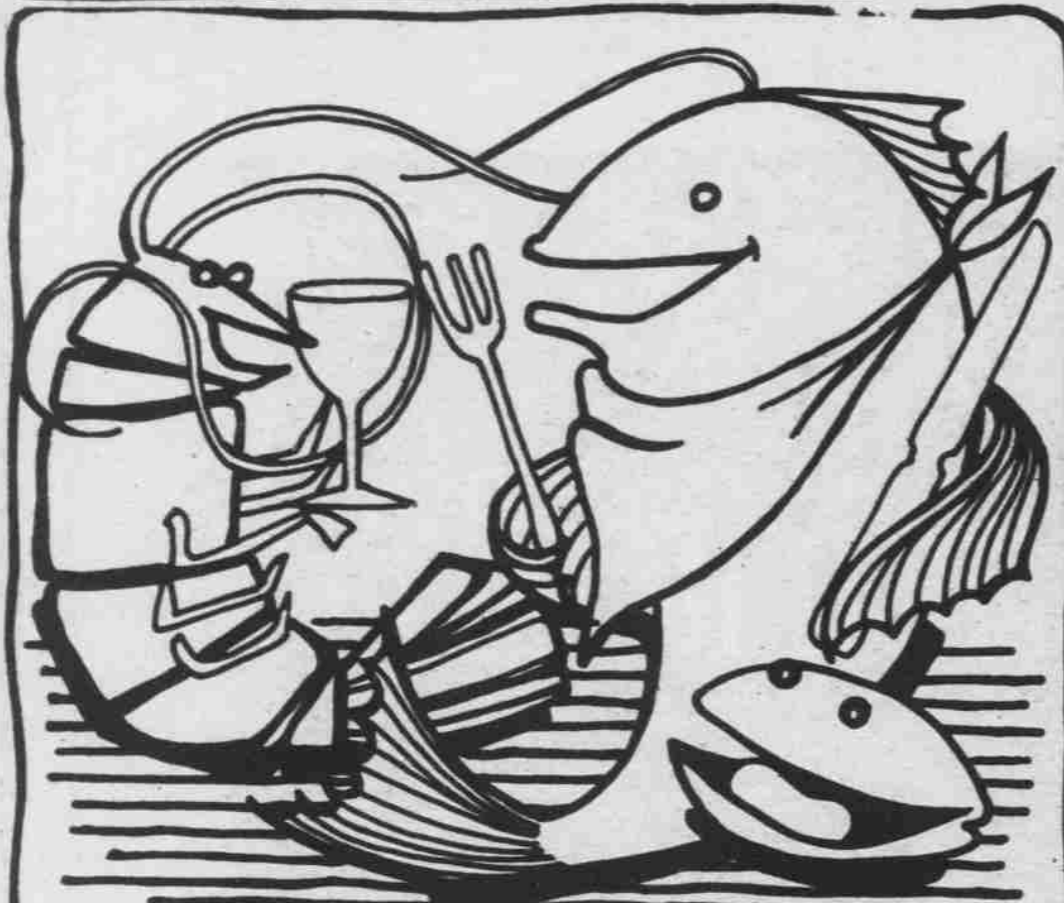


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New coach will inherit strong UNC women's hoops squad

By MIKE BERARDINO

Assistant Sports Editor

Adjusting to a brand new coaching system and coping with the loss of the school's all-time leading scorer isn't easy, but if North Carolina's talented women's basketball team can do both of the above, it may actually improve in 1986-87.

After compiling a 23-9 record, finishing second in the ACC with a 9-5 mark and reaching the NCAA tournament's second round last season, the Tar Heels lost coach Jennifer Alley to the business world and legendary guard Pam Leake to graduation. The first void will be more easily filled than the second.

The new coach on the block is Sylvia Rhyne-Hatchell, a native of Gastonia, who compiled a 273-80 record and won two NAIA national championships in 11 years at Francis Marion College in Florence, S.C. Widely respected by her peers, Hatchell, 34, assisted N.C. State's Kay Yow last summer on both the U.S. national team that won the gold in Moscow at the Goodwill Games and the squad which took the World Basketball Championships.

Hatchell hopes to turn UNC on to the same pressing, fast-breaking game that worked so well at Francis Marion. "I love the fast-break game. I love pressure defense and I like to play a lot of people," she said. "I'll change defenses a lot — like every time down the court."

Leake, who poured in 2,001 points for the Tar Heels during her reign, garnered Kodak All-America honors in her senior year by averaging 22.4 points per game and will be sorely missed. The feisty 5-7 Chapel Hill native may play professionally in Europe.

Despite Leake's departure, North Carolina is ranked 16th in the Associated Press preseason poll. The reason is simple: Leake was UNC's only loss.

Topping the lengthy list of returnees (there are 10 in all) is center/forward Dawn Royster. The senior from Nyack, N.Y., was second on the team in scoring (14.4) and first in rebounding (9.4), despite missing 15 midseason games with a knee injury. A legitimate All-America candidate at six-foot and 160 pounds, this Rooster can sky and plays like a female version of ex-Georgia Tech star John Salley.

"Dawn is just an exceptional athlete," said Hatchell, shaking her head in disbelief. "At times, it just amazes me that she can get the shots off that she does. And then they go in!"

Royster's front-line cohorts include juniors Kathy Wilson, Tia Poindexter and Chrissy Watts, as well as sophomore Merlaine Oden. The 6-2 Wilson, a finesse player who prefers wing-play to scrapping it out underneath, averaged 13.9 points and 6.7 rebounds last season. "Kathy is such a good outside shooter. But I'd like to get her a little stronger and a little more mean inside," Hatchell said.

Poindexter netted eight a night, but the six-footer's strong suit is rebounding. Watts is a cat-quick corner who is someone to watch this year, while Oden, a banger inside, knows how to use her weight (180 pounds) to her advantage.

The swing players will be sopho-



There will be many hands flailing away at the conference title

more Marsha Matthews and senior Marlene List. Matthews possesses a nifty baseline shot while the gutty List is a fine passer and fast-break igniter. List, who was one of only two Tar Heels to play in all 32 games last season (Oden was the other), may become what Hatchell termed "a sixth player, a sparkplug off the bench."

In the backcourt, steady senior Darlene Cannon and streaky sophomore Liza Donnell will battle for playing time. Donnell, who came on strong at the end of last season, is immensely talented and can shake and bake with the best of them.

Obviously, determining a set starting lineup will be a difficult task. But Hatchell downplays its importance: "A starting five has never been a big thing to me. A lot of people get hung up on a starting five, but I don't. I'm going to start the people who play the hardest (in practice)," she said.

Others who may receive time include sophomore guard Jenny Yopp, freshman recruit Wendy Gatlin, a forward from Fort Walton Beach, Fla., and a pair of freshman walk-ons — Charisse Mapp and Kelly Kennedy.

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Here's a quick stroll around the rest of the ACC, with last year's records in parentheses and conference-standing predictions on the left.

2. VIRGINIA (26-3, 13-1) — The Cavaliers' only regular-season loss came courtesy of UNC, 60-58, when

they were ranked No. 3 in the country. With an experienced cast returning, including All-America forward Nancy Mayer and the dynamic backcourt duo of Daphne Hawkins and Donna Holt, UVa will be formidable again.

3. MARYLAND (17-13, 6-8) — The defending ACC tournament champions are positively stacked. Sophomore point guard Deana Tate, who killed UNC in the title game, is the best in the conference.

4. DUKE (20-8, 9-5) — Forward Chris Moreland led the conference in rebounding and scoring last season, edging Leake for the latter honor. The Devils knocked off UNC twice and could rise higher with better play in the pivot.

5. WAKE FOREST (16-13, 4-10) — My surprise pick. Coach Joe Sanchez' four-guard lineup gave the rest of the league fits at year's end. The guy's a winner and, what's more, he's got hot-shooting senior Amy Privette in his backcourt.

6. N.C. STATE (18-10, 9-5) — Kay Yow has center Trena Trice and little else. UNC beat them twice last season. It's about time the 'Pack had a down year.

7. CLEMSON (12-16, 4-10) — Another mediocre year for Annie Tribble's Tigers who will miss Janet Knight and Melinda Ashworth greatly. Sophomore forward Karen Ann Jenkins will emerge as a new star.

8. GEORGIA TECH (10-17, 1-13) — The Jackets took UNC to overtime in Atlanta, but that was a fluke. Gigantic Dolores Bootz (6-7) is their best, but one person can only do so much.