Sports

Netter Joffs emerges from shadows

By JIM MUSE Staff Writer

Fame has never exactly come pounding on Lisa Joffs' door. The girl they call "the team nutritionist," a slender, 6-foot tall sophomore from Boulder, Col., has been one of the most consistent performers on the team for the last two seasons, yet she has worked in virtual anonymity.

Now, however, things are beginning to change. Joffs began the season in a rotation of four middle blockers, but three of them went down in a freakish rash of early October injuries.

Joffs knew that it would be her time to shine. "Now it was no longer a rotation," she said. "It was only me. There was a lot of pressure, but I'm glad I was given a chance to help out."

She responded to the pressure in a big way. In three matches on October 23 and 24, she had 24 kills for a .412 hitting percentage, 17 digs, nine assists, five service aces, and three solo blocks. Those impressive numbers earned her ACC Player of the Week honors for the last week of October.

Looking at her performances lately, it's ironic that Joffs had never seriously considered getting an athletic scholarship until her junior year of high school.

"I always thought that I would get an academic scholarship," Joffs said. "Then my JV coach told me that if I would play volleyball all year round, that I could get a scholarship. That really got me psyched."

She joined the Front Range USVBA volleyball club in Aurora, Col., and drove the hour and a half each way twice a week for practices,

gained playing for the club as the key to her getting a scholarship.

"High school volleyball in Colorado is not enough," Joffs said. "You don't learn enough and you're not exposed enough. Front Range got me really playing volleyball."

The summer before her senior year, things really started moving for her. She went to an elite camp, where players went to get honest opinions about themselves from some of the top coaches in the nation.

"My coach told me that I could play in a good top 20 program," she said. "After that I started thinking that I'd better get my butt busy."

So instead of waiting for coaches to come to her, Joffs went about selling herself. She sent out letters about herself to schools around the country. "I was amazed with the responses I got. Everyone wanted a tape or more information, and some schools went so far as to offer me a visit right off the bat."

The decision to come to North Carolina was an easy one for her to make. After hearing of UNC's academic reputation and its up-andcoming volleyball program, she took her official visit, and she was sold. She turned down offers to visit other schools after coming to Chapel Hill.

She stepped in last year and started immediately, doing everything there was to do on a volleyball court. She began the season as a setter, but it became apparent that All-ACC setter Sherri Vogel had that job wrapped up, and that Joffs' talents could be used elsewhere.

and again on Saturdays for tourna- she finally found a home as a middle that well."

ments. She credits the experience she blocker. She finished the season with 24 solo blocks and 50 block assists, both good enough for second on the team, and performed consistently well all over the court.

> Coming into this year, however, she knew that some things would be different. "I knew that we had some great freshmen coming in," she said, "and with Ann Schildmeyer's great performance last year, that if I wanted to play at all, I would have to play great."

> An intensive off-season schedule of conditioning and tournaments helped to prepare her for the tough year to come. She began this season as part of a four-person rotation, starting intermittently, and seeing her share of action, but it was freshman Sara Wilson who sparkled. Then the injuries hit.

> First, Schildmeyer broke a thumb in practice. Then Wilson, who had been doing so well, went down with a serious ankle injury, and freshman Susan Andrews was still struggling with the college game.

In stepped Joffs, and she caught fire. In addition to her ACC Player of the Week performance, the last month has seen her move from sixth to second on the team in service aces, up to second in solo blocks and first in block assists. In addition to all that, she raised her hitting percentage an incredible 95 points, from .131 to .226, by hitting .314 for the month.

"I was really surprised," Joffs said of her award. "I went to the team and said this is everyone's because I couldn't have done it if the rest of the team hadn't been there for me. After a short stint at outside hitter, I honestly thought that I didn't play

Her modesty is disarming. "I don't think of myself as a great athlete. I just think that I've acquired the skills that I have through experience," she said. "I just have to play smarter than everyone else. I'm not going to be the most powerful player on the court. I realize that. But hopefully, I'll be one the smarter players, and one of the more consistent players on the court."

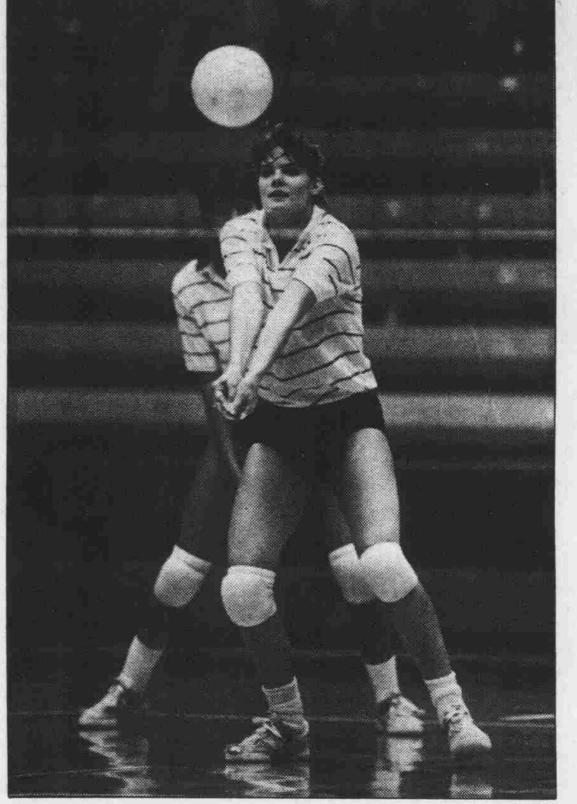
According to assistant coach Kevin Kirk, she's pretty well there already. "Lisa's biggest attribute is her consistency," Kirk said. "That's saying a lot because we've been moving her around a bit. She came into the program already at a very high level because of her experience, so she hasn't necessarily improved all that much, but she hasn't had to.

"She is continuing to work hard, and is getting better all the time. The last few weeks she's gone from being a steady blocker to a good offensive player, too. She's still getting used to being a middle blocker, and she's gotten a lot more dependable."

That dependability is exactly what she is looking for."If the ball is going to touch my hands," Joffs said, "I want it to be a point or a side out. I just want to be someone whom everyone can count on."

Another thing which has been on her mind since last November is the ACC volleyball tournament. This year's tournament, held in Clemson, begins Friday night.

"Last year I didn't feel like I was a contributing factor," she said. "I was ready, but I wasn't helping us win. This year I want to go in and be a force that helps us win. I'm ready to go."



Middle blocker Lisa Joffs can finally bask in the glow of recognition

School officials remain mum regarding Crum By JAMES SUROWIECKI Moyer Smith, executive vice Sports Editor president of the foundation,

continued refusals to comment by

Fordham III said Wednesday that

his position had not changed and

that he would not comment on the

possibility of Crum's dismissal.

Fordham did, however, say that

such a move would be solely the

responsibility of the University,

and that the Educational Founda-

tion, the primary fund-raising arm

of the athletic department, would

play no part in any discussion of

Fordham said of Crum's potential

impact on fund-raising efforts.

"The decision is the University's.

It's not the Educational

The Daily Tar Heel

"I don't think that's relevant,"

UNC Chancellor Christopher

university officials.

Crum's status.

Foundation's."

Owens ends suspense, signs with Syracuse

From staff reports

CARLISLE, Pa. - Billy Owens, one of the nation's most highly touted high school basketball players, will not be in Chapel Hill next year. The 6-foot-8 Owens brought an end to weeks of speculation Wednesday, when he announced at an earlymorning press conference that he wanted to play for the Syracuse Orangemen of the Big East.

Owens, a consensus high school All-American, plays for Carlisle High and is coached by the father of UNC guard Jeff Lebo. Lebo also attended Carlisle. Owens chose Syracuse over

both UNC and Villanova, although the Wildcats were thought to be a long shot at best.

Owens visited Syracuse last weekend, and watched the Orangemen football team demolish Boston College, 45-17. Originally, he had planned to delay signing until April, and the consensus was that the longer he waited, the better chance UNC had to get him. But Owens' visit sealed his decision, and he made that choice public Wednesday, which was the final day of the early signing period. "There was a lot of pressure on

me," Owens said. "I knew where I

wanted to go, so why wait?"

Owens was regarded by most as the nation's second-best prospect, behind devastating shot-blocker Alonzo Mourning. And while certainly not the defensive force Mourning is, Owens' offensive skills are better developed. A thin, sleek player with guard-like dribbling and passing abilities and the scoring potential of a dominant inside player, Owens averaged 29.6 points and 12.9 rebounds as a junior, sparking Carlisle to a 28-5 record en route to the state 4-A title.

Owens' signing means the Big East will have the country's top two recruits, as Mourning signed earlier this week with Georgetown. It also means that Syracuse coach Jim Boeheim has now signed an incredible seven players.

The decision to reject UNC and, perhaps more importantly, Tar Heel coach Dean Smith, was a difficult one for Owens.

"It was very hard," he said of turning Smith down. "I didn't know what to say to him. But I know he likes me as a person, so I'm sure he's happy for me."

Smith, as is his policy, had no official comment on Owens' decision.

Ironically, despite Smith's reputation as an academic stickler, it was the academics at Syracuse that swung Owens toward the Orangemen. His brother, Mike, is now a sophomore football player at Syracuse after sitting out last year because he failed to qualify under Proposition 48. Owens has yet to make 700 on his SAT, and said he was struck by his brother's academic improvement.

"I really do think I made the right choice for me academically," Owens said. "That was a big concern of mine. I saw what they did for my brother academically, and that helped me make my decision."

The status of UNC football expressed similar sentiments, coach Dick Crum remained in saying that the foundation had no limbo Wednesday, amid mounting authority with regard to the rumors that Crum was on the dismissal or hiring of coaches. verge of being dismissed and

"We make no personnel decisions at all," Smith said. "We don't have any administrative powers. We just raise money."

According to Smith, even if Crum's coaching performance hindered the foundation's attempts to raise money, that would not affect his job status.

"All that's up to the athletic director," Smith said. "We report to the athletic director, but the only thing we administer is the programs of the foundation,"

Crum, who according to an unnamed source told the football team Tuesday that he did not believe he would be back next year, has made no public comment on the situation since his weekly press conference.

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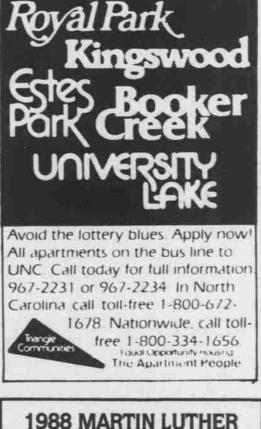
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