

Hungry Madden's return has UNC team, fans excited

By **CLAY HODGES**
Staff Writer

It was Oct. 14 in Chapel Hill, the day before the UNC men's basketball team would begin official practice for the 1987-1988 season, and Kevin Madden sat on the front row of the Smith Center talking with the media. He was wearing Carolina blue and white.

For many patient UNC fans, this was a sight to behold. After a one-

year layoff due to academic difficulties, Madden is back in uniform and ready to make up for lost time.

The 6-foot-5, 220-pound Madden could very well be one of the best athletes on the team and his impact on the current edition of the Tar Heels should be limitless. With a physique that resembles former Maryland All-American Len Bias, Madden will take the court this fall with two years of experience in the UNC system and

a refreshing maturity about the game and his role with the team.

"I want to do anything I can to help out the team," Madden said. "I try to tell the freshmen to listen to coach Smith and stay on top in the classroom and everything will work out."

Although things have begun to work out, last year's layoff was mutually painful for the team and for Madden, and his decision not to transfer was a major one.

"I talked with my family about transferring, but I would have had to sit out a year no matter where I went," Madden said. "It was in my best interests to stay."

Madden was eligible to play last year by NCAA academic standards, yet he failed to meet the requirements coach Smith expects of his players, and the decision was made to red-shirt the Staunton, Va., native.

"Kevin has pride academically now," added coach Smith. As he currently stands, Madden is on schedule to graduate with his freshman class.

Madden did not spend the past year idly. He worked out with the team consistently, concentrating on his ballhandling and improving his defense. Although he could not play in games, and perhaps because of that fact, Madden had no trouble generating enthusiasm for the practices.

"I had (Joe) Wolf and J.R. (Reid) on me," Madden recalled. "There was always competition."

As a freshman, Madden made some recurring mistakes, yet left behind many statistics that showed considerable promise. He connected on 59.1 percent of his shots from the floor, and converted just under 70 percent of his free-throw attempts. If his work during the past year pays off, he should cut down considerably on his turnover rate — 34 as a freshman despite averaging just 10.7 minutes a game.

Madden has already proven his desire to be a leader. In the first Blue-White game, he scored 22 points, including consecutive 3-pointers at the close of the contest as his White team tried to rally. Although the Whites came up one point short in the end, Madden's performance in the game was a healthy indication of his future potential.

"Last year Kevin always took the leadership over the blue team in practice," Smith said. "We are hoping he will play much better this year than in his freshman year."

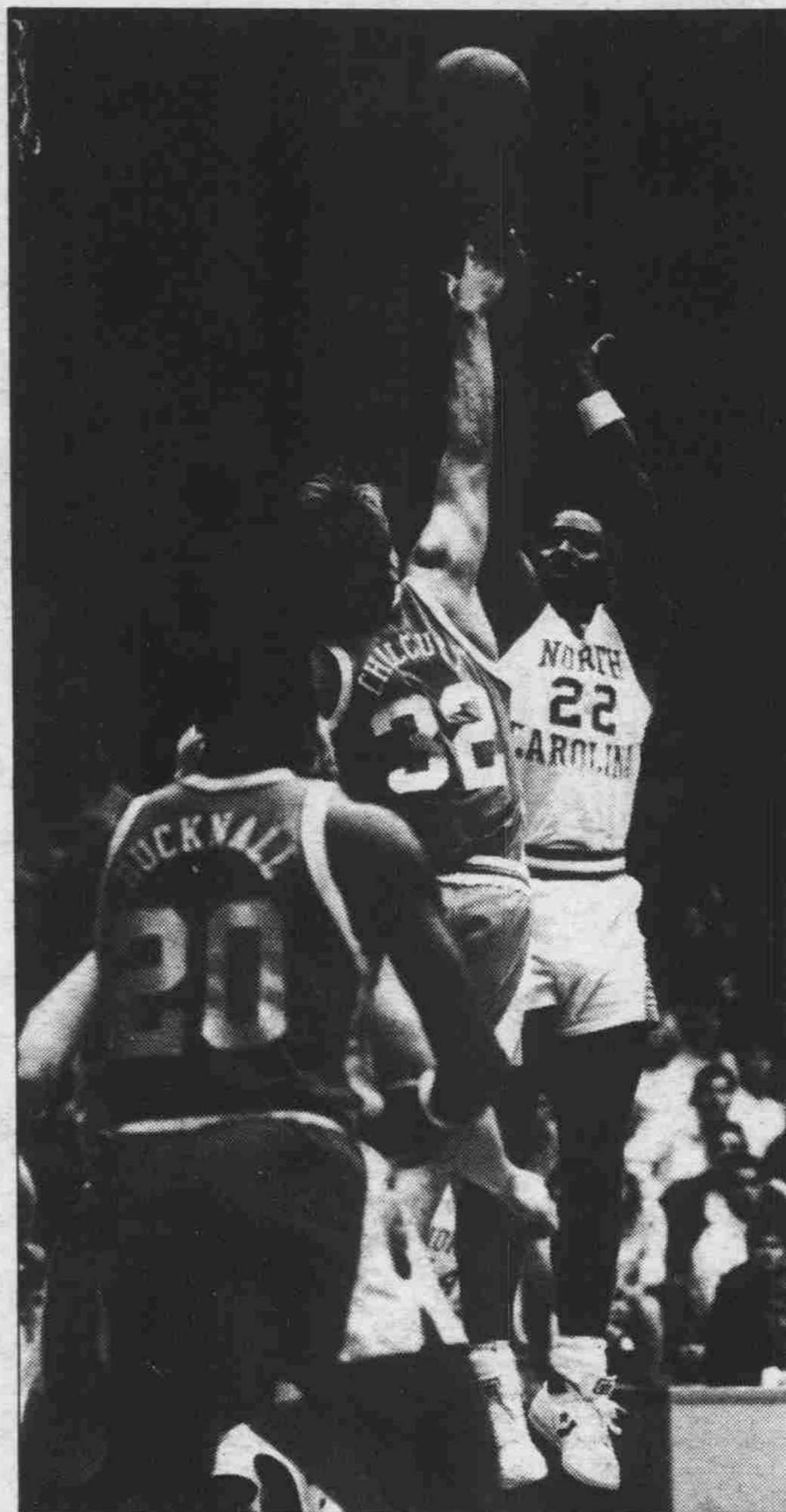
The Tar Heels are uncharacteristically deep at the position Madden will assume this season, small forward. Junior Steve Bucknall will also battle for time at the position, and has improved considerably since his arrival two years ago. Freshman Rick Fox will also play small forward.

Although Madden is clearly the favorite to take the starting role, he remains modest about his future.

"You can only have five guys on the court at a time," Madden said. "I'll be happy if Buck plays, and if I play. I just want to do my best when I'm in the game."

Madden looks forward to sharing the frontcourt duties with preseason All-American J.R. Reid. The presence of Madden under the boards should reduce the defensive pressure on Reid. Likewise, if an opponent chooses to double and triple-team Reid, Madden will be open for a damaging offensive counterpunch.

"J.R. is a great athlete to play



DTH/David Minton

Sophomore swingman Kevin Madden will be firing many jumpers this season to make up for lost time

with," Madden said. "He is very unselfish and hopefully I can help take some of the pressure off him."

Madden's versatility is such that he could help the Tar Heels at the big guard position. He has improved his ballhandling and his consistency with his outside shot, thus giving coach Smith additional depth in his inexperienced backcourt.

"I've been working on my jump-shot, and I could play both positions, but it would be difficult to learn," said Madden, who quickly added, "If Coach could simplify it for me, I could do it."

"Kevin has the athletic ability to play two positions, and we may need him to come in at guard for us at times," Smith said. "He could learn to play both positions."

Madden is excited about the prospects of the coming year, and sees the 87-88 Tar Heels with a much different style than the year before.

"We will be a much quicker team than last year, even though Kenny (Smith) is gone," said Madden. "We will miss Joe (Wolf) and Pop (Dave Popson), but I think I can take up the slack."

Madden has nothing but praise for the incoming freshmen, King Rice and Rick Fox, and believes they will be a great asset to the team.

"Rick will give us depth and can help us with rebounding. King has worked on his jump-shot, and has improved 100 percent," said Madden.

Madden looked back to the year he spent on the sidelines as a learning experience, and said he doesn't regret his decision to stay with the team.

"Last year was the first year I've not played basketball in a long time. I was able to get my life together."

Kevin Madden is back. And with renewed confidence and a strong sense of purpose, he is ready to let everyone know.

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