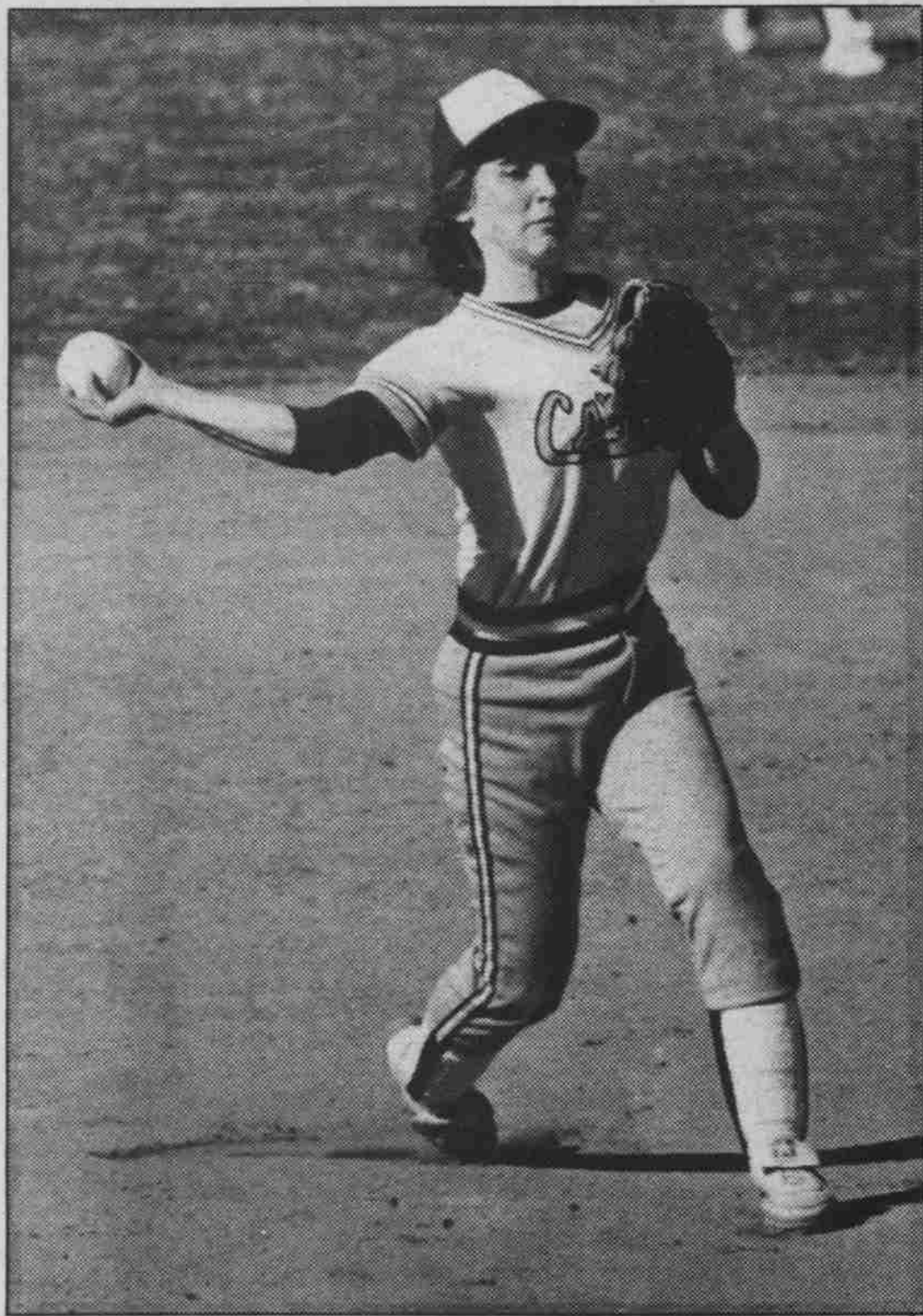


Searching for consistency



Senior shortstop Gina Elmore has a rifle for a throwing arm

Softball coach Donna Papa says her team must avoid inconsistency

By NEIL AMATO
Staff Writer

North Carolina softball coach Donna Papa is ready for a new beginning.

After the Tar Heels won 71 of 96 games under her direction in 1986 and 1987, North Carolina had an inconsistent, streaky 1988 season, finishing 25-23.

"Last year was an off year for us," Papa said of her squad, which started out 5-1, later lost seven in a row, won eight straight and then dropped seven more.

"It was a little different than in the past. I didn't think we were necessarily a streaky team two years ago. I think that maintaining our concentration will keep us from being streaky."

Scheduling was one reason for North Carolina's up-and-down season. Many of the Tar Heels' losses came on the road, and when UNC went on its seven-game win streak, six of those wins were at Finley Field, while the other was at a neutral site.

UNC seemed accustomed to Finley's friendly confines, where the hosts went 14-4 last season.

"Anytime you're at home, there's always an advantage," Papa said. "You get more comfortable with your environment; you know what your field does. The outfielders and infielders know how the field plays."

The Tar Heels' road record, however, left something to be desired.

"When you're on the road and you

don't get your last ups, you can't wait until the last inning to make something happen," Papa said. "You've got to make it happen right away."

In that vein, Papa says one of the keys to her squad's success is scoring early.

"I've always liked to score early," Papa said. "If you score early — like in the first inning — you put the other team on the defensive right away. You force them to play catch-up."

"That's something we're going to strive for on the road. And when we do score, we have to hold our lead. There were a few games last year where we were up two or three runs in the seventh inning and ended up losing. We can't afford to do that this year."

According to Papa, the Tar Heels' road record was sub-par because they played many of the tougher teams on their schedule on the road. North Carolina will square off with some of those teams on the road again this season, but Papa thinks her squad will fare better this year away from home.

Some of the top-flight teams UNC will travel to play are Furman (fourth in the South Region last year), Iowa State (ranked 10th in preseason) and the Florida State tournament in mid-March, where they could face three Top 20 programs in FSU, Nebraska and Missouri.

North Carolina will face most of its toughest competition in five mid-season tournaments.

"We're looking to win our tournament, the Carolina Pride Invitational, and we have our sights set on winning Virginia's tournament," Papa said.

Pitching will be a key for this year's squad since only two pitchers who were regulars return this season. The Tar Heels other would-be returner with mound experience is senior Cara Geary, who will miss the season with a shoulder injury.

"Cara will be missed a lot," Papa said. "Last year, she had the best ERA (0.47) among our pitchers. She's a big loss. When you play in excess of 50 games in a season and one of your pitchers gets hurt, you're in trouble."

Two quality pitchers who do return are senior co-captain Regina Finn and sophomore Tracy Brower. Finn, after notching 26 wins in her first two campaigns, had a bit of an off-year in 1988 but will add experience to the squad.

Brower, a Newtown, Pa., native, was last year's ace, going 14-11 with a 0.70 ERA and recording 117 strikeouts. The Tar Heels other pitcher, Maggie Moline, is still developing and should see some action, if not on the mound, in the infield.

The Tar Heels will lack experience on the other half of the battery with the graduation of co-captain catcher Amy Spelman. Spelman's spot behind the plate will be filled by two freshmen, Michelle Rupp and Lisa McGloin. Papa believes it will take a while for them to get used to college competition, but she is confident in their abilities.

"They both came from good high school programs," Papa said. "They both have good catching qualities, but there's still room for improvement. I think they both have the ability to mature at that position. With each game, I think they'll gain more confidence."

Speaking of confidence, Papa has given the two newcomers her vote by letting them do something even veteran catchers can't — call the pitches for each game.

"This season will be a test for them," Papa said. "But I certainly don't think they'll crack under the pressure."

Jena Houttekier is slated to start at first base in the absence of

See SOFTBALL page 13

If you need it for Spring Break

SID'S HAS IT!

SLEEPING BAGS
TENTS
THERMAL UNDERWEAR
JUNGLE CLOTHING
for Sunny Florida!

Surplus Sid's Military Surplus
302-A E. Main St.
Carrboro

NOW OPEN FOR LUNCH!

Now Hiring Drivers & Phone Personnel

968-FAST **Fast, Free Delivery!**

968-3278

Gumby Dammit!	Party Special!	Tarheel Special!
12" One-Item Pizza	20" One-Item Pizza	16" One-Item Pizza & 2 sodas
\$4²⁵	\$9⁴³	\$6⁸⁴

CROOK'S CORNER

Hamburger, BBQ, French Fries, and more every night.

610 W. Franklin St. Chapel Hill, NC

Chapel Hill Cleaners

Since 1947

Two Downtown Locations

422 West Franklin St. (across from McDonald's)

169 East Franklin St. (The Laundramat)

\$1.00 OFF FREE SOAP coupon for each washer at **The Laundramat** expires 3/21/89

Buy one hotdog, get one FREE at **The Laundramat** expires 3/21/89