

Kevin Madden & Scott Williams

The Rock Don't tell Madden he's too small

By ANDREW PODOLSKY

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Kevin Madden is at a crossroads. Again. But this is the last one . . . finally.

After four years of more trials and tribulations than most soap opera stars, the senior is finally at do or die time, and he knows it. But the Staunton, Va., native doesn't seem too concerned. He's finally found a home, and he's happy.

Madden, the elder statesman on the 1989 UNC team (and the oldest player in the ACC at 23 years of age) has endured a lot in his four years at UNC. "I look back on it and it was frustrating. I think I've grown up a lot because of it," he said.

The 6-foot-6, 230-pound senior co-captain came to Chapel Hill in the

fall of 1985 touted as the second coming of Michael Jordan. High — make that impossible — praise.

After a frosh season in which he never started, saw intermittent time as a sub and scored 4.9 points per game, Madden sat out the 1986-87 season because of "academic difficulties." Madden almost transferred but decided to stay at UNC.

He returned to much hoopla as a preseason starter in 1987-88, scoring 22 points to lead the squad in the Blue-White game. "His time has come, and fans are excited" headlines touted. Unfortunately, an ankle injury hampered "him" much of that year, and he started just 10 of 25 games, scoring 8.6 points per game.

Last year, Madden — this time sans the massive expectations of being

the Tar Heels' most explosive presence on the court — quietly averaged 14.6 points per game (second on the team) and took fourth on the team in rebounds with 4.8 per game.

Enter 1989.

He spent the summer honing his skills with more dedication than he ever has, determined to make himself better and make this *his* year. During the Tar Heels' summer tour of Europe, Madden said he tried to focus himself and get ready for what promises to be a grueling year. His teammates picked up on this increased intensity and were impressed.

"He's got to be one of the best 6-4 guys I've seen, inside or outside," teammate Rick Fox said. So why doesn't anyone pay attention to Madden in this, his senior year?

No one even mentions Madden's name anymore when they talk about what will become of the 1989 Tar Heels. He's been here so long. As one of the quietest Tar Heels, both on the court and off, Madden is often overlooked.

People forget that he was touted as the second coming of Mr. Jordan. People forget that he is UNC's leading returning scorer. People seem to forget that he is the *only* returning Tar Heel that achieved All-ACC honors last year — he was second-team All-ACC.

Well, in a year where Kevin Madden is a forgotten man — where Scott Williams, Rick Fox, King Rice and Pete Chilcutt are being watched and studied — they'd better not forget about him when the season starts, because it looks like he's finally where he wants to be: in the paint.

At 6-6, Madden is hardly what you would think of as the prototypical dominant inside player. But after toying with where to put Madden last year and the year before, coach Dean Smith may finally realize that Madden is ready to do some damage on the inside. J.R. Reid won't be there to clog it up anymore.

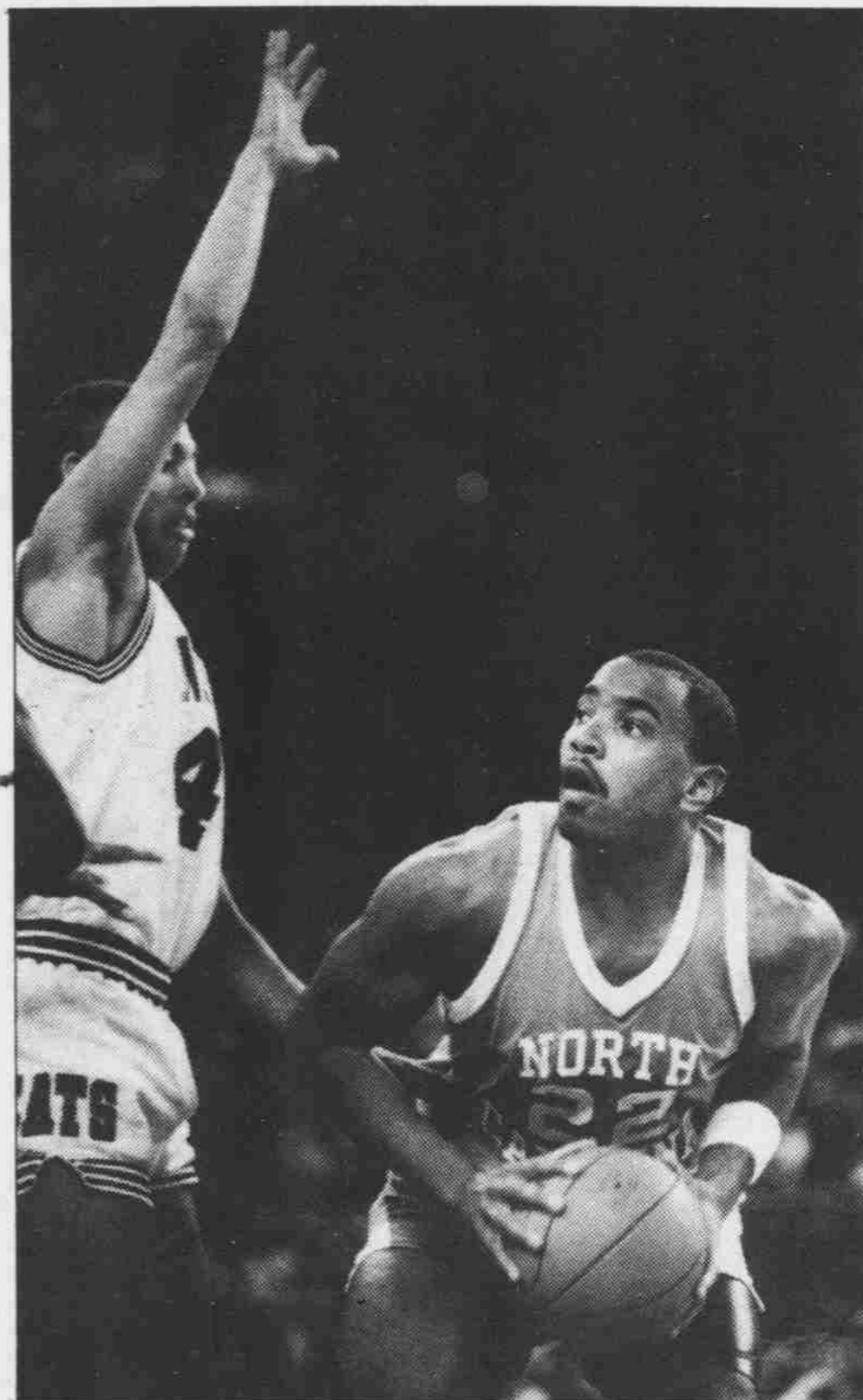
"He really does enjoy the inside," Smith said. "But it hurts us defensively to have him guarding someone 6-10. I enjoy seeing him inside, though."

Actually, the extremely soft-spoken, almost apologetic Madden seems most concerned about contributing anywhere that will help UNC this year. It's an attitude that appears to go beyond the normal North Carolina response of "I'll do anything for the team; individual goals are not important." Madden really means it.

He has seen what hype the press can put on a player. And he knows now that none of that matters. He's just ready to play.

"It's not up to me," he said. "I'll play anywhere that's best for the team. But if I'm playing two-guard, I still hope I have the chance to go inside and post-up. I love the inside."

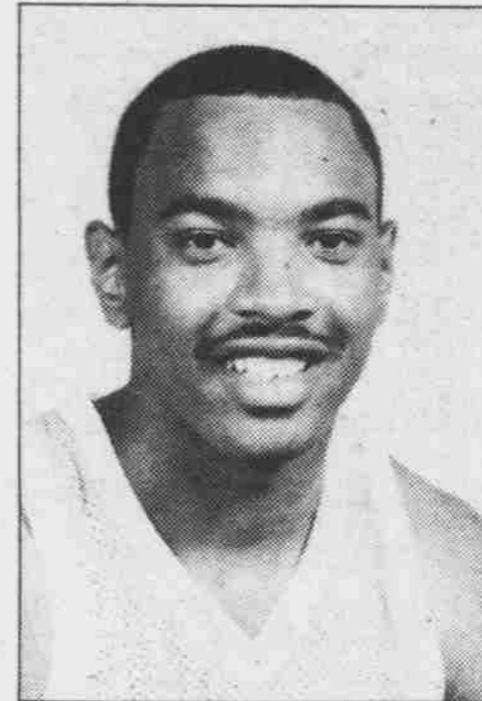
But what about the pressure of his role as a team co-captain? "Last night I had trouble sleeping. I'm a senior now and everyone looks up to you. Once I get started, I'll be fine," Mad-



Madden has a focus in his final season as a Tar Heel

den said. "You don't have to be vocal (to lead), you just have to perform on the court. I just want to play anywhere as much as I can. I'm ready to play."

He can play inside and outside. He's one of the few people that has the body and the talent to do both. And considering his team attitude, he'll play either position without



Kevin Madden

complaining. But whether he admits or not, Madden wants to stay inside.

So Kevin Madden appears to be a small man — in height — that wants to play with the big boys. Before you

write him off too soon, don't forget that a man named Barkley has made a living outrebounding men usually eight inches taller than him, a fact that is not lost on Madden.

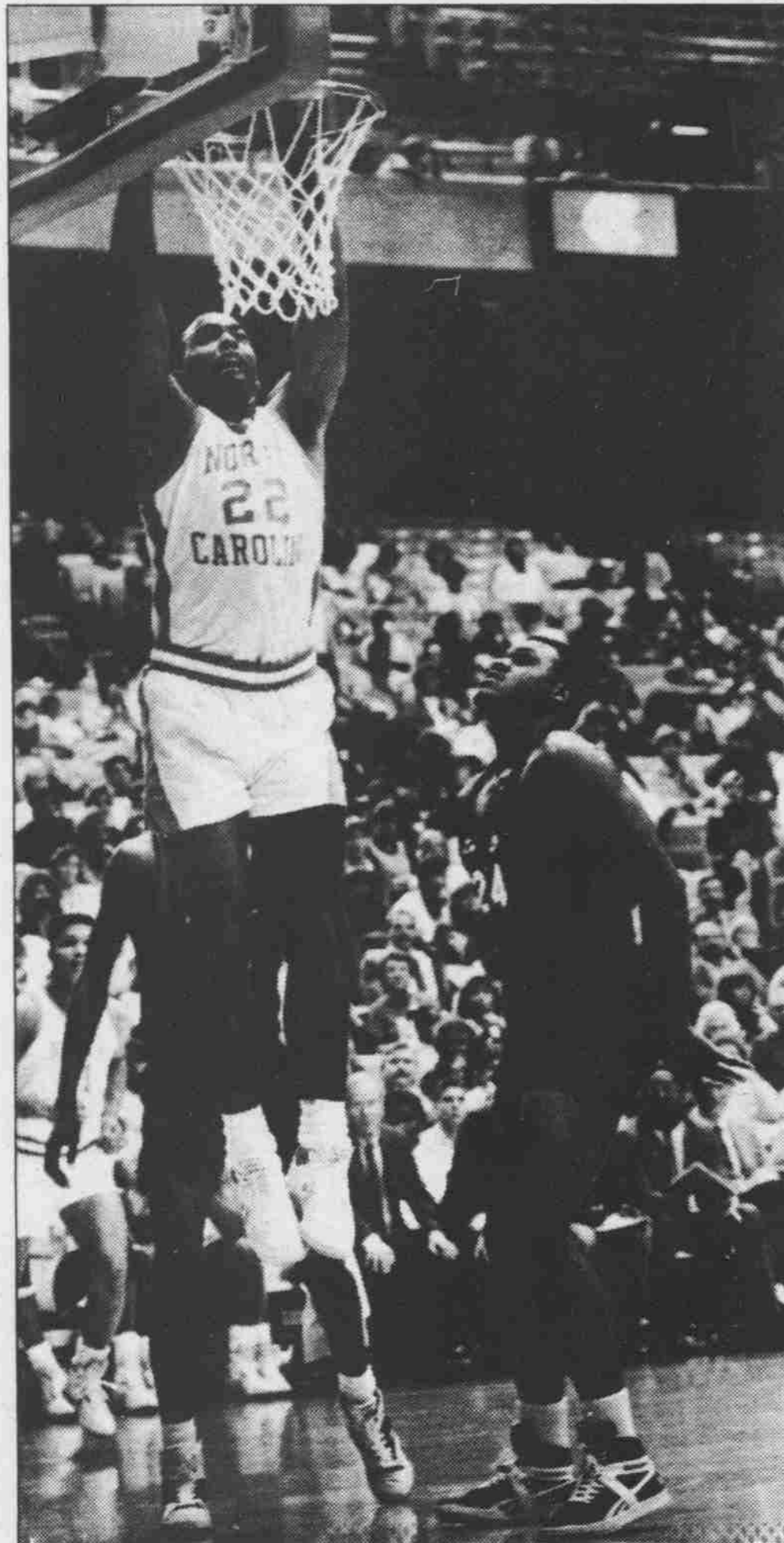
"Kevin can compete on the inside," Smith said. But Smith knows that if Madden is going to aspire to the NBA, he will have to learn to play guard this year. "He certainly has the range (to shoot the three-pointer). That's no problem. It could be an NBA three-pointer. He has unbelievable range," Smith said.

Said Madden, "With my size, I can still play big man in college. As I look down the road, if I want to play in the NBA, I'm going to have to learn to play outside more. But I still have this year to post up. I didn't back down last year (on the inside). That's the way I learned from my brothers and that's the way I play." Three of those brothers, incidentally, played college ball. Half-brother Jerry Venable played for 10 years with the Harlem Globetrotters.

Madden succinctly summed up the lesson his brothers taught him: "I don't back down from anybody."

That, my friends, is heart. He's had all the adversity of too high expectations, a tough academic problem, a team with a jam-packed forward lineup and a lack of a definite role behind him.

As he hits his final crossroads, Kevin Madden finally has his heart in something that he is sure about.



Madden's 6-foot-6 frame looms larger when he's down low