

# — UNC's twin towers of power

## The Hard Place

### Williams rebounds from adversity

By DAVE GLENN

Sports Editor

Four long years ago, Scott Williams lived in a different world.

It was centered around his extended family in Southern California, the land of surf and sand, sun and fun.

There, in his hometown of Hacienda Heights, Calif., Williams began his quest for athletic greatness by following in the footsteps of his 24-year-old brother, Al.

"Al is the guy I've always idolized," said Scott, the younger of the two at a not-so-tender 21 years of age. "I can remember some pretty tough games that we played. When I was younger, I played basketball like he did; I played baseball like he did."

"I really owe my athleticism to him. I was always trying to compete, always trying to keep up so I could beat him."

And keep up he did. Whatever Al showed his "little" brother on the basketball court must have made for some pretty interesting family outings, because it helped turn Scott into one of the hottest prep stars in the

nation.

So hot, in fact, that a venerable old man named Dean Smith came calling from about 2,700 miles away — from a little town in North Carolina called Chapel Hill, where they've been known to play a little basketball.

So, after Williams was finished leading his Wilson High School squad to eight consecutive postseason victories and the California state championship, it was time for The Big Decision:

With a number of Pac-10 schools beating a path to the Williams' front door, with the sun and fun of the Pacific coast screaming for attention, with fond thoughts of family and friends tickling his emotions, did Scott really want to come all the way to Tar Heel country?

Yes, he did, and he eventually took brother Al with him. Neither has looked back since.

Scott, an introspective type, said his heart told him where he should spend the next four years of his life.

"The one thing that pointed me to

Carolina was the coaching staff," Williams said. "I really liked Coach Smith as a person, and I liked the way he treated his players off the court. I knew he was an outstanding basketball coach, and that's obviously one of the factors."

"But I liked the fact that he treated his basketball players like human beings and not just as guys out there trying to win basketball games for him. From the number-one scorer to the last guy off the bench, everyone is considered equal on this team."

Little did Scott know that the family atmosphere at UNC would soon take on a whole new meaning for him and Al.

During Scott's sophomore season with the Tar Heels, he faced the death of both parents in a murder-suicide at his father's hand.

It was then, Scott said, that he truly understood what was meant by the "Carolina family" atmosphere intricately linked to Tar Heel basketball.

"When I look back at everything — coming all the way out here from California — I can see that it started a new phase in my life," Williams said. "What we (the players) have here is more than just the coaching staff."

"When you say the Carolina family, you're talking about the former players, the managers, the secretaries and on down through the sports information department. The whole realm of everyone involved in Carolina basketball has been really supportive of me and my brother these last two years, and I think that made it a lot easier for both of us."

"North Carolina is home for me now. This is it for me. I have to put things behind me and get on with my life. I still have a lot of goals I want to accomplish, and I'm going after them by taking life day by day."

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Day by day.

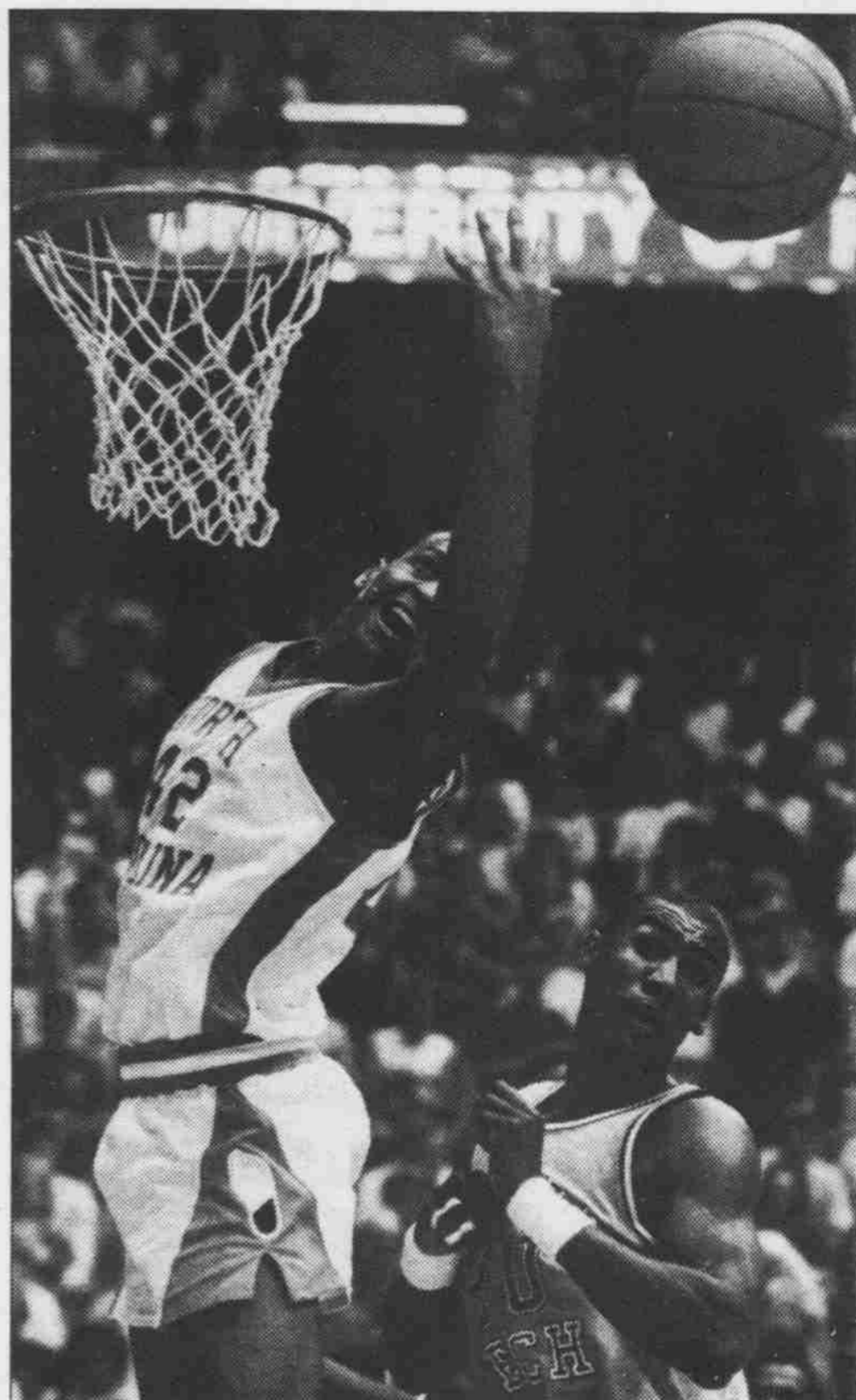
That kind of attitude has also helped Williams confront some of the less serious problems in life — knee injuries, shoulder surgery and, of course, those darn fouls.

In fact, that's the way Scott's summer in Chapel Hill went — day by day, hour by hour — while he watched countless drops of sweat tumble down from his new-and-improved 6-foot-10, 245-pound frame. Williams hit the weights for 90 minutes a day in an effort to build up his legs and his surgically-repaired right shoulder. In doing so, he added 15 pounds of muscle to last year's playing weight.

At the first preseason practice, Williams' coaches and teammates were duly impressed.

"He looks like he's been taking steroids," said Smith, who's trying to send his weight in a different direction this year. "Of course, he hasn't. But he looks like he should be walking down the beach getting pictures taken."

Tar Heel forward Rick Fox had a



Williams hopes the ball bounces the right way for him in 1990

more practical view of the importance of Williams' increased mass. "Scott used to be all upper body and no legs," said Fox. "But now his legs are a lot stronger. I don't think there's anybody who can push him out of the lane. He could get nine or 10 rebounds a game for us this year."

Of course, Williams' rebounding ability has never been questioned, and it's a safe bet that he'll improve on last year's team-leading 7.3 boards per game. Similarly, Williams' reputation as one of ACC's best shot-blockers (50 a year ago, second in the ACC) and most accurate shooters (.549 career field goal percentage) should only be enhanced as the season develops.

But ask Williams and the UNC coaching staff what the broad-shouldered Californian needs to change as he approaches 1989, and you'll get two entirely different answers: Scott wants to score more (he averaged 11.4 ppg last year); his coach wants him to foul less (with 74 more personals, he'll become the ACC's all-time foul leader).

"Scott has to start agreeing with officials more," Smith said of The Man With A Thousand Faces. "If he does that, they won't call so many fouls on him."

Williams has his mind on fouls, all right, but in a different sense; he wants to start drawing them.

"In years past, I've been more of

a defensive-minded player," Williams said. "This year, I'm going to look to score more. I'm going to take the ball to the basket, try to draw some fouls. If you get the other teams' big guys in foul trouble, that opens up the lane for everyone else."

If he can do that, and he can keep blocking shots and grabbing rebounds, and he can throw in a few more jump-hooks, and he can control his emotions — well, that may be too much for even Scott to think about right now.

For when Williams looks back on his first days as a Tar Heel, on that first moment he suited up in No. 42, he stops and wonders.

"Four years ago, I couldn't possibly see myself where I am today," he said. "You come in and you hear a lot of stories about how hard Coach Smith is going to be on you. You can get a little nervous and worry so much that you get away from your style of basketball."

"But I've been through a lot since then. This year, I just want to be able to walk off the court after our last game — hopefully a win — knowing that I had a good time my senior year. That's the most important thing to me."

It should be, because Scott Williams is in a whole new world now, and it's his for the taking.



Added strength should help Williams down in the trenches