

# Lone soph Davis gladly sheds rookie label

By ERIC WAGNON

Staff Writer

Unlike this year's team which is overflowing with six freshmen, last year's UNC squad boasted only one new face. It seemed all the attention last season focused on the ones that got away — Billy Owens, Walt Williams and Christian Laettner among a host of others.

That left UNC coach Dean Smith with only a rather unheralded, 6-foot-4 guard named Hubert Davis to show as his 1988 recruiting class.

As the lone Tar Heel freshman last year, Davis learned what it was like to be the new kid on the block. "Last year I kind of doubted myself, especially coming out against different crowds and playing against teams like Indiana," Davis said.

Davis added that even the Smith Center could be nerve-racking for a freshman. "I was a little bit more nervous here (in the Smith Center) than on the road," he said. "On the road no one knew you, and I kind of liked the crowd booing and going against you."

"He (Smith) told me that it would be very hard for me to play here,"

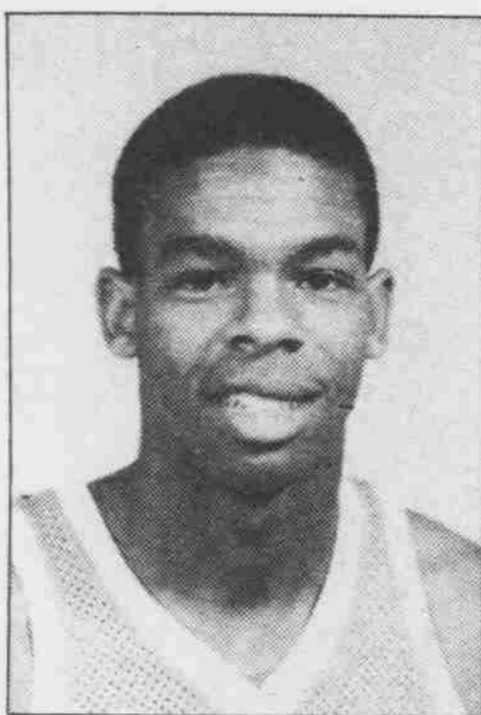
## Virginia

The bad news for Holland is that the football team is headed for a New Year's Day bowl game, and Kirby will not be available until the start of the conference slate.

Holland can rest assured, though, knowing that his point guard, Crotty, will be there for the duration.

He shot only 44 percent from the field last year, but he turned it on when it really counted, averaging 62 percent in the NCAA tournament.

While Holland has some holes to



Hubert Davis

Davis said. "He said that with the range of talent here, I probably wouldn't get any playing time."

Smith, however, may have underestimated Davis' role in the UNC program. Last season, Davis ended up averaging 7.1 minutes and 3.3 points a game.

Davis worked his way into Smith's system, appearing in 35 of 37 games, and into the hearts of the Smith Center crowds. The sight of No. 40 trotting onto the court inevitably led to chants of "Huuubert, Huuubert!"

One feature of Davis' game that does not show up in the statistics is his fluid, silky shooting style. Correct form translated into good numbers in this case, as Davis shot 51 percent from the floor. However, he could manage only 31 percent from three-point territory.

"We told Hubert to work on increasing his range," Smith said. "He has a very nice shot just inside the three-point line and I imagine he has worked on it."

Davis added that his problem last year was not really a physical problem of not having enough shooting range but more of a lack of awareness of the three-point line. "I worked a lot on my three-pointer, trying to get my feet behind the line and get more notice of where I was," Davis said. "Sometimes (last year) I stepped on the line a lot."

If Davis has improved in that aspect of his game, it would be of the

utmost benefit for the team, considering the graduation of three-point threats Bucknall and Jeff Lebo.

Davis also worked on his defense over the summer. "One of my main problems last year was playing off the ball," he said. "I'd usually try to play my man while the ball was on the other side, and I didn't have time to help that side."

Smith said this fall that Davis' work over the offseason looks like it will pay off this season. "Hubert looks improved to me," Smith said. "He looks more confident, which is with any sophomore. To me, it's a huge jump from freshman to sophomore. They're scared to death as freshmen, then they come in as sophomores and feel like they belong."

Davis agreed. "As a freshman, you really don't know what to expect. As

a sophomore, you come in and you know the ropes. You're just more relaxed and a better ballplayer."

Even as a freshman, Davis was surprisingly effective under the basket. While Davis' totalled only 27 rebounds, 12 came on offense.

Most players do not have such a small difference between offensive and defensive rebound totals. Especially for guards, the defensive rebound mark usually far outpaces the offensive total.

While North Carolina is traditionally well-stocked with blue-chip prep phenoms, Davis, who was not highly-touted out of high school, has managed to fit into Smith's system with his hustle and shooting ability. Especially if Davis has improved his three-point shooting, he should see increased playing time this year.

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