

## Conferences

backcourt capable of pulling some upsets in Tate George, Chris Smith, John Gwynn and Steve Pikell.

### No. 2 — ACC

**Legitimate national title contenders:** North Carolina.

**Probable order of finish:** North Carolina, Clemson, Duke, Wake Forest, Georgia Tech, N.C. State, Maryland, Virginia.

The Tar Heels are the only team in the conference with the goods to go all the way, but the conference is probably as tough from top to bottom as any conference ever.

Clemson's twin towers Elden Campbell and Dale Davis make a formidable foe and a combo the coaches of the ACC fear.

Duke faces year 001 A.D. (After Danny), but it still has the talents of Christain Laettner and the smarts of Coach K.

With forwards Chris King and Sam Ivy, Wake is a team on the rise and should be invited to the NCAA's for the first time since 1984.

Georgia Tech is a marshmallow-like team: tough on the perimeter, but soft in the middle.

N.C. State has the highly touted backcourt of Rodney Monroe and Chris Corchiani, but little inside play.

### No. 3 — Big 10

**Legitimate national title contenders:** Michigan, Illinois, Indiana.

**Probable order of finish:** Michigan, Illinois, Indiana, Minnesota, Michigan State, Ohio State, Wisconsin, Iowa, Northwestern.

Michigan attempts to do something that hasn't been accomplished since the mid-'70s: repeat.

Don't be surprised if the Wolverines do it, because only super-scorer Glen Rice has graduated from the starting five. Rumeal Robinson, Sean Higgins and Terry Mills make up enough talent to repeat playing three-on-five.

Illinois might be the favorite to win this season, if Nick Anderson was still with the Illini. He's not, but Kendall Gill is. If Marcus Liberty plays up to his reputation, the Illini may party in Denver.

Putting Indiana as a national contender is a stretch, but never bet against Bobby Knight. The General had the top recruiting class in the country, and he's got Eric Anderson and Lyndon Jones back. Expect the Hoosiers to improve game after game and

to peak in March and possibly April. Coach Clem Haskins has his Golden Gopher team on the right track. Minnesota, which reached the Sweet Sixteen last season, returns its starting five, including All-Big 10 forward Willie Burton.

Michigan State is another sleeper in the Big 10. The Spartans return sweet Steve Smith and streaky three-point bomber Kirk Manns. Medical red-shirt Mike Peplowski could jell this team.

Ohio State doesn't have a senior or a player over 6-8 who will play, but it does have Perry Carter and flashy freshman Jimmy Jackson.

### No. 4 — SEC

**Legitimate national title contenders:** LSU, Florida.

**Probable order of finish:** LSU, Florida, Alabama, Mississippi, Georgia, Tennessee, Vanderbilt, Mississippi State, Auburn, Kentucky.

The Southeast will be dominated by the LSU Tigers, making the conference race one for second place.

LSU made life difficult for teams last season with just Chris Jackson and Ricky Blanton. Blanton is gone, but add 7-footers Shaquille O'Neal and Stanley Roberts, and someone has trouble.

Florida has the edge for second in the SEC, because of the potential in its Dwaynes, Schintzius and Davis, and in Livingston Chatman.

Alabama has six of its top eight

back from '88-'89, and coach Wimp Sanderson always prepares the Crimson Tide well.

Georgia will be led by two great players in workaholic Alec Kessler and in silky smooth Litterial Green.

Mississippi will live and die on the game of Gerald Green. Fortunately for Ole Miss, Green's game is superb and notoriously unrecognized.

### No. 5 — Big Eight

**Legitimate national title contenders:** Missouri.

**Probable order of finish:** Missouri, Oklahoma State, Oklahoma, Iowa State, Kansas State, Colorado, Kansas, Nebraska.

The Missouri Tigers have become a perennial powerhouse in the Big Eight. Center Doug Smith and guards Lee Coward and Anthony Peeler keep them that way.

Oklahoma State is a national sleeper, but folks in the Big Eight know about them. No coach in the conference seems to want to play the Cowboys, who return Richard Dumas and Bryon Houston.

Oklahoma lost Stacey King and Mookie Blaylock, but coach Billy Tubbs has reloaded well with junior college talent. Jackie Jones is a scorer and guard Smokey McCovery comes from the same juco as former Sooner point men Blaylock and Rickey Grace.

Iowa State needs to get its Pasta, Victor Alexander that is. Alexander,

the Cyclones round 6-9 center, doesn't get enough press, but pro scouts will be looking at him.

### No. 6 — Pac 10

**Legitimate national title contenders:** Arizona, UCLA.

**Probable order of finish:** Arizona, UCLA, Oregon State, Washington, Arizona State, USC, Stanford, Oregon, Washington State

Arizona was said to be better than last year when it was thought transfer Chris Mills would play. However, Mills is being held out by the NCAA, but the Wildcats do have center Brian Williams and a good supporting cast.

UCLA is a team quickly on the rise. The Bruins are loaded offensively with soph Don McLean and froshes Mitchell Butler, Tracy Murray and Zan Mason.

Oregon State has All-America candidate Gary Payton to build around.

### No. 7 — Metro

**Legitimate national title contenders:** Louisville, Memphis State.

**Probable order of finish:** Louisville, Memphis State, Florida State, Cincinnati, Southern Mississippi, South Carolina, Bimbo Coles, Tulane.

The Cardinals have an athletic backcourt with LaBradford Smith, Jerome Harmon and Everick Sullivan. Felton Spencer will pound inside and make Louisville a force.

Memphis State will purr on the outside. The Tigers have super lefty Eliot Perry and zonebuster Cheyenne Gibson in the backcourt, but need some play in the paint.

### No. 8 — Southwest

**Legitimate national title contenders:** Arkansas.

**Probable order of finish:** Arkansas, Texas, Houston, Texas A&M, Texas Christain, Rice, SMU, Texas Tech, Baylor.

Arkansas has a great backcourt with sophomores Todd Day and Lee Mayberry and has a great all-around player in Lenzie Howell.

With Travis Mays back with Lance Blanks, the Longhorns will steer themselves to another NCAA bid.

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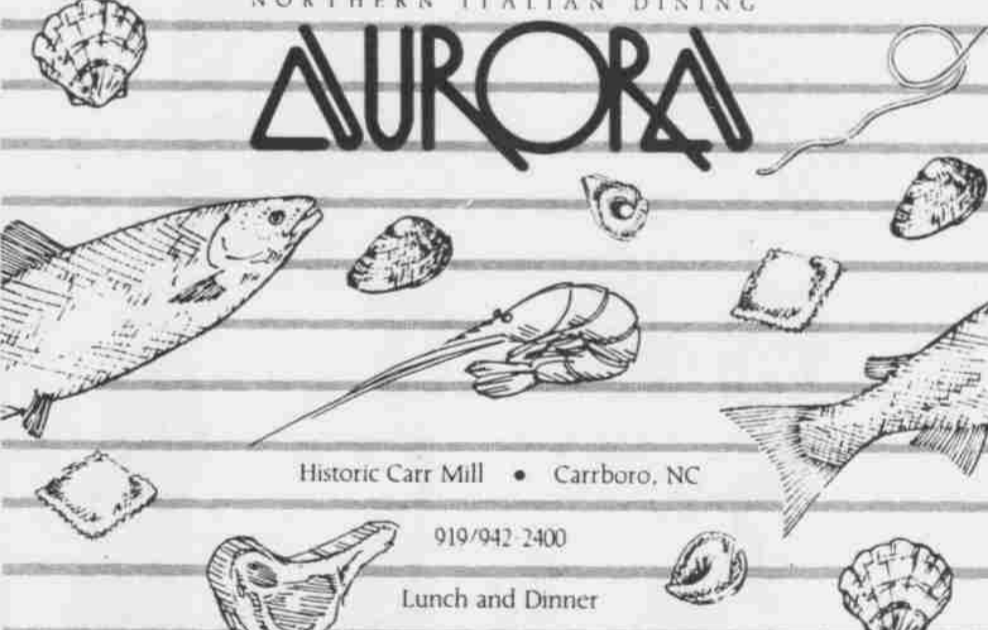
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