

KEVIN SALVADORI

That 'other' junior isn't surprising anyone now

By Carter Toole
Staff Writer

Well, the fabulous five freshmen of two years past are now juniors.

Derrick Phelps, Eric Montross, Brian Reese, Pat Sullivan and Kevin Salvadori are set to prove that their press clippings were justified by leading UNC to a national crown.

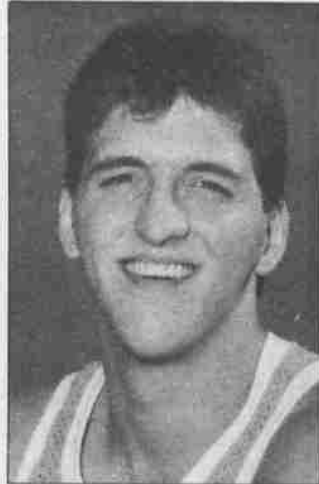
Whoa, back up. Kevin Salvadori? He was *not* one of Dean Smith's prize recruits ...

True, but with Clifford Rozier off to Louisville, Salvadori now finds himself in a position he might not have envisioned three years ago as a skinny, underpublicized recruit.

Once a roundball afterthought, Salvadori provided solid inside play for North Carolina last season, and when the redshirt junior from Pittsburgh walked off the Rupp Arena court after the Tar Heels' final game last season, he knew he would play an even bigger role in UNC's 1992-93 campaign.

And to say he's excited is a gross understatement.

"This (summer), I ran more than any time I've ever done in the past," Salvadori said. "I never ran much dur-



Kevin Salvadori

ing the off-season. But I tried to keep my endurance up throughout the whole summer, so I'll be able to play a little bit longer at a time and get in a lot more."

Last year, with Rozier's departure, Salvadori's playing time increased five-fold. He averaged 5.9 points a game and

blocked 63 shots, good for second in the conference. He also shot 54 percent from the field and 74 percent from the foul line.

But it was his ratio of blocked shots to minutes that really raised some eyebrows around the ACC — Salvadori swiped a shot away every 7.9 minutes, four minutes *faster* than anyone else in the conference.

And expect those numbers to increase this year. Salvadori will be the first big man off Smith's bench, and he will be counted on to help smother the opposition's frontcourt and provide some scoring punch.

Salvadori? An offensive spark plug?

"Hey, Kevin has really expanded his game to where he does very well 15, 16 feet out with his jump shot," said UNC center Eric Montross. "It's a complement to have him down low with me."

Salvadori agrees.

"I think Eric and I are two different players, and hopefully, Coach (Smith) sees it the way I do. (Montross) plays more of a power game — bumping, pushing, hitting — and I try to play a little more finesse, trying to guard people with my quickness, trying to block shots."

"I think it would be very beneficial

for the team for us to play at the same time."

That statement would have bordered on ludicrous at this time last year, but Salvadori's improvement in all aspects of his game has been astounding.

UNC's 75-73 victory against Duke Feb. 5 highlighted just how far Salvadori had come. He scored 12 points, snagged six rebounds, blocked two shots and aided Montross in holding All-American Christian Laettner to 4-of-12 shooting.

In the public's eye, Salvadori had arrived. But he said the turning point for him as a basketball player occurred earlier in the season, during the Tar Heels' Christmas break tour of Europe.

"I played a lot more than I was accustomed to, and I came back a much more confident player," he said. "I could tell right then and there that I was really in good basketball shape."

Smith knew Salvadori would have to bulk up if he was going to endure punishment in the paint, so the coach put his lanky center on a six-meal-a-day culinary workout last year.

"This is a big change, 18 (years old) to 22," Smith said. "When they leave, we give them a picture that's funny, it's

this real scrawny looking guy most of the time. Kevin really was late maturing physically, so he should be stronger."

But Salvadori realizes that "good basketball shape" entails far more than bulk. To challenge the Malcolm Mackeys and Rodney Rogers of the basketball world, quickness is as important as size. Thus, conditioning was Salvadori's top priority over the summer.

"I worked very hard on my footwork this summer, and I don't think many people are gonna be able to beat me," he said. "Power forwards in this league run up and down the court like guards, so you have to make sure you can keep up with them or you don't get the playing time."

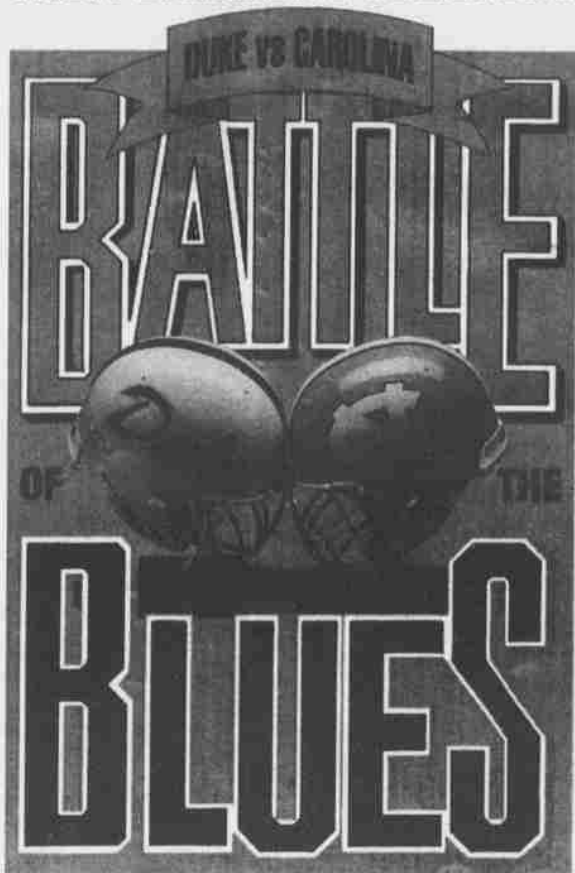
Ahhh ... playing time, a theme that rings throughout a conversation with Salvadori. He is not content with simply spelling Montross off the bench.

Salvadori has already proven himself as a defensive force, and by working on his offensive game, he feels he presents a well-rounded hoops package that beckons a starting role.

"I think it would be really good for

See SALVADORI, page 28

The Perfect Christmas Gift!
Available Now!
FROM GRIDIRON PUBLISHERS



 Bull's Head Bookshop
UNC Student Stores 962-5060

Applebee's Wishes Carolina
A Great Season!



Join Us For Your
Pre-Game Warm Up
and
Post Game Cool
Down!

We'll Be Waiting For
You With Fun! Food!
Friendliness! &
Drink!


Neighborhood Bar & Grill
1506 E. Franklin St.
Chapel Hill, NC