



## Championship for Heels? UNC may win it all

I don't care what AP, UPI, or any of the other polls around the country say. With all respect to the Hawkeyes of Iowa, UNLV, and all the other 87 heavyweight clubs in the nation, I still truly think that off the charts, the real power is obviously Sky Blue -- that the Tar Heels of North Carolina are No. 1.

From top to bottom, Dean Smith has built a solid, well-balanced basketball team. And when I say balanced, I mean from the three-point area to down in the paint, and being able to use multiple defenses that can neutralize any of the offensive assets of the different opponents they play.

First, let's look at the backcourt situation with Kenny Smith, who pushes the ball upcourt quicker and more consistently than anyone in the game, has the ability to penetrate and kick off when drawing a double team, and who, along with his running mate Jeff Lebo, provide the finest three-point potential in the college game today, which stops the effi-

iciency of any zone thrown at this Chapel Hill club. And, in case of an injury, they have a safety valve in Ranzino Smith, who is adequate, physical, and mature.

The baseline is led by Wisconsin's gift to college hoops, Joe Wolf, who can score facing or with his back to the basket. Surround him with the triumvirate of Dave Popson and the Baby Twin Towers of J.R. Reid and Scott Williams, add a gentle mix of four other better-than-average players, and presto: You have Numero Uno.

North Carolina's style on offense is to move the ball upcourt quickly and not let the defense get set. If the numbers aren't right, then they'll got to a set offense, looking to punch the ball inside to one of their quartet of six-foot 10-plus baseline keepers.

Obviously, if you sluff off, then they'll open up with their bombers from far out, and everything else being equal, they'll wear you down in the foul situation, so that

by the second half you're in foul trouble, and ready for the knockout punch, which usually comes with about eight minutes to go in the game.

During the last few minutes, they'll usually spread it out, work the clock, and get their high-percentage shooters to the foul line. Believe me, if you can't shoot fouls, you can't play for Dean Smith.

To sum up, watching North Carolina is almost like seeing a movie in slow motion. They use multiple, multiple substitutions in the first half; Coach Dean will go with no fear to his 11th man. And that 11th man is no fluke. He's a kid out of high school somewhere that, at the time he graduated, everyone thought was the greatest thing since 7-Up.

So, if we're talking about the best team in the country, I say forget the charts, and the polls, and the Morning Telegraphs and Daily Bugles. The Tar Heels, in my mind, just have to be odds-on favorite.

But the real strength of North Carolina, I feel, is more than just the X's and O's, or five guys on the court. It comes from what Dean Smith has done, from

the total basketball package he has created. The character and orderliness of his program is what every coach dreams of. Its style is unique.

Win or lose, you'll see Dean Smith's players run off the court at the end of a game, whether they're 20 points up or 20 points down. Subs on the bench stand and applaud their teammates, and on every basket that's scored off a pass, you'll see the guy who scored point to the player who gave him the assist.

Carolina is truly an efficiently-run juggernaut. Even at practice, no one gets in without a written pass from the athletic department. At courtside, there's a special carpet laid out, where the ballplayers can lay while they're doing their stretching, and everything is sparkling clean -- like the penthouse suite at the Waldorf on the day the President comes to town.

When the Commander-in-Chief blows his whistle to start practice, you'd think it was the 100-yard dash for the gold in LA. From then on, every second is accounted for, and every problem has been anticipated. And I have to add that Bill Guth-

ridge, Coach Smith's No. 1 assistant, is a complimentary basketball genius.

One of Dean's greatest assets, I feel, is that he never criticizes his ballplayers to the public. He also runs the senior star system to take care of his upperclassmen, but I don't think even he can hide freshman J.R. Reid. Reid is definitely a three-time All-American, an Olympic star in Seoul, and I've no doubt that some day his jersey will be hanging at the Smith Center, alongside those of Michael Jordan, James Worthy, Billy Cunningham, Sam Perkins and on, and on, and on.

Finally, the big question: Will the Tar Heels win the NCAA? Or even get to eat creole food and go from the Dean Dome to the Superdome?

Oh, sure, they'll stub their toe a couple of times down the road, like any good team does. The undefeated season in college hoops has gone the way of the caribou. But in this Chapel Hill club, I can't find a flaw, anymore than I can find a chink in the armor of Dean Smith's program. Where is that soft spot, the Achilles Heel, the underbelly? Where is the albatross? I can't find one.



Staff photo--Chris Allison

### Man-to-man

UNCA's Randy Shepherd (12) and William Funderburk display some tight defense against their Eastern Kentucky opponents. The Bulldogs defeated the Colonels of Eastern Kentucky 73-72 on Tuesday in the Civic Center.

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