

SLAP  
SHOTSDallas  
will win it  
all, againKyle S. Phipps  
Sports Editor

The Vince Lombardi trophy has spent the last nine months in Green Bay, but don't expect it to stay around much longer. Once again, the Cowboys will be the best team in the world.

Most experts around the country are expecting Green Bay to repeat. Some people are even expecting the Pack to have the first undefeated season since the 1972 Miami Dolphins. Sorry kiddies, but Dallas is going to return to the top of the National Football League.

The Cowboys are stacked on the offensive side of the ball, and the defense and special teams are going to be good enough to get them by. The Dallas team is focused and they should realize that they missed out on another world championship last year. Without scandal or injury, there's no stopping 'the Boys' this time around.

Emmitt Smith, the Cowboys' superstar running back, is back to his old form following off-season surgery. Smith was never able to get on track last year, and he still ran for over 1,200 yards. Coupled with all-pro fullback Darryl "Moose" Johnston and the biggest offensive line in football, the Cowboys running game will be safe and secure.

Troy Aikman is still at the top of his game. Last year, Aikman had the worst year of his career since his rookie year, but he had been stripped of his favorite targets in Jay Novacek and Michael Irvin for most of last season. Aikman is a smart and savvy quarterback who won't throw many interceptions.

Irvin will be around all season, barring injury, and he is still one of the top five receivers in the league. To add depth to 'the Boys' receiving corps, Jerry Jones picked up former Bronco Anthony Miller in the off-season. Miller will provide the deep threat that Dallas has been without since Alvin Harper left after the '93 season.

Who are the other contenders going to be? Green Bay will almost surely have another outstanding season, but will not be able to beat Dallas in the NFC Championship game. Quarterback Bret Favre will lead his team once again, but without Edgar Bennett in the backfield, the Pack will be a one-dimensional team. I don't expect Dorsey Levens to be able to carry a Bennett-size load.

It's unclear if wide receiver Robert Brooks is going to be able to return from his mid-season injury last year at 100 percent, and Antonio Freeman has a bad habit of dropping the ball once he makes a reception.

Hopes are high for the Carolina Panthers, but I don't expect them to even make the playoffs this year. The Panthers released last season's NFL sack leader, Kevin Greene, and the defense looks to be in real trouble. They're old, and won't be able to stay healthy all season the way they did last year. Kerry Collins and Tshimanga Biakabutka aren't ready yet to carry the load for an entire NFL season.

As for the AFC. Well, it's the AFC and they haven't won a Super Bowl since the Reagan administration, and that's not going to change this year. Denver will probably be the sacrificial lamb for the NFC, but Pittsburgh or New England could be there. Not that it really matters.

## UNCA hires new basketball coach

By Chris Garner  
Staff Writer

After much emotional stress within last year's women's basketball program, UNCA Athletic Director Tom Hunnicutt announced the hiring of DePaul University Assistant Coach Kathleen Weber on June 25.

Weber was an assistant coach at DePaul, and was selected by the Athletic Department after former Head Coach Ray Ingram was released from his contract on April 30.

"I love the school, and I love the area," said Weber. "The schools that I've worked with in the past have been private schools, and within the private setting, there is more of a common goal, not only in the athletics, but within the school. When I interviewed at UNCA, I got the same kind of feel from a public setting. The people were very close and very friendly."

Upon her arrival at UNCA, Weber was greeted with a substantial increase in the recruiting and scholarship budgets within the women's basketball program.

The recruiting budget increased from \$6,400 in the 1996-97 season to \$8,000 this season. The scholarship budget rose from \$116,000 to \$143,400 since last year.

"Her recruiting budget has been increased and we have also provided Coach Weber with a car, and we're getting another car for one of her staff members," said Hunnicutt. "Overall, we've done quite a lot. We want to bring (the budget) up to somewhere in the range of our men's recruiting budget," Hunnicutt said.

"We're trying to make all of our programs comparable," said Hunnicutt.

Weber seems to look at the budget

increase as a great opportunity for the Lady Bulldog basketball program.

"I definitely plan on bringing in the best talent that we can get. Our first priority is that we would like to stay local. Bringing in local talent helps bring more fans to the game than it would by bringing in kids from out of state. But if we have to go out of state to get the best talent, then we will," Weber said.

Weber was an assistant coach at DePaul for five seasons. While there, the Blue Demon program won 106 games, two conference championships, and made three appearances in the NCAA tournament. She assisted in on-court coaching, pre-season and post-season workouts, scouting, marketing, and recruiting.

Before her time at DePaul, Weber spent one season at Notre Dame where she assisted the Fighting Irish to a 23-9 record as well as a berth in the Women's National Invitational Tournament.

"Kathleen has been an integral part of the success enjoyed by the DePaul women's basketball program," said Doug Bruno, DePaul University Women's Head Basketball Coach.

"Kathleen is totally ready to become a head coach. Five years from now, Kathleen will be one of the bigger names in women's coaching," said Bruno.

Weber, a Chicago native, attended Marillac High School in Glenview, Illinois. As a senior she was an All-American and Catholic League selection.

She was also a three-time All-Division selection and two-time All-Conference player.

After graduation, Weber attended C.W. Post/Long Island University in Brookville, New York, where she played from 1984 to 1988. She is the university's third all-time lead-

ing scorer with 1,296 points and the all-time leader in assists (503) and steals (408). As a senior, she was named East Coast Athletic Conference Player of the Year, conference tournament MVP, and led all NCAA Division II players in free throw percentage.

As far as the outlook on the 1997-98 basketball season, Weber is nothing but optimistic.

"The team has been working hard on their own," said Weber. "They have been getting themselves in shape, and they're really enthusiastic about it."

"We have a lot of veteran players coming back. Everybody is very optimistic about the relationships of the people involved, which I think is essential in having a successful season," Weber said.

The Lady Bulldogs are coming off a 14-13 record from last season, and Weber feels that the upcoming season brings room for improvement.

"We would like to be at the top of the Big South Conference," said Weber. "There are 33 conferences in Division I basketball, and every one of them has a bid to the NCAA tournament. Obviously we would like to be at the top. We would like to win the Big South Conference."

Weber has had a hectic summer after her appointment as head coach, but has still managed to squeeze in time for the Lady Bulldogs in an effort to start and maintain a personal relationship with the team.

"It's just been a crazy summer," said Weber. "I've been recruiting by myself, and there just hasn't been a lot of time to look at game film, but the girls have been working real hard."

"We just had a dinner last night at my apartment with the team and the staff. But with them coming back to school, we're allowed to have individual skill workouts now



PHOTO BY ROB HAMMONDS

UNCA Women's Head Basketball Coach Kathleen Weber. Weber comes to UNCA from DePaul University. While at DePaul, the Lady Blue Demons won two conference championships.

and we're allowed to start working out with them," Weber said.

According to former colleagues, Weber will eventually prove to be a tremendous asset to the UNCA Athletic Department.

"Kathleen Weber is one of the bright young coaches in women's basketball," said Jeni Lenti Ponsetto, DePaul University senior associate athletic director and chair

of the NCAA Women's Basketball Tournament Committee.

"I am very excited that she is going to have this opportunity to prove her capabilities as a head coach. I think she will be an excellent addition to the staff at UNC-Asheville. It will be a matter of time before Kathleen has that program challenging for the Big South Conference title," Ponsetto said.

## Volleyball team looks to senior leaders

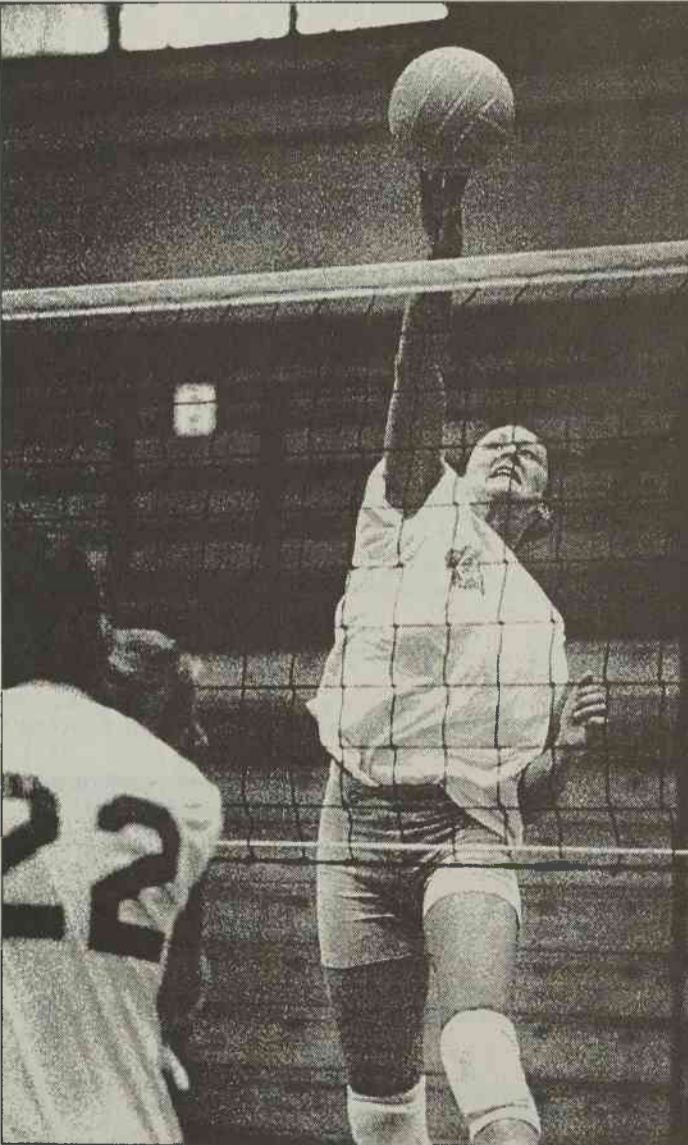
By Robert Payne  
Staff Writer

PHOTO BY ROB HAMMONDS

The women's volleyball team is expecting big things and big hits out of middle hitter Jenni Reynolds. The Lady Bulldogs will be in Winston-Salem for a tournament this weekend.

The 1997 Lady Bulldog volleyball team is coming off a strong pre-season and looking to improve on last year's 21-16 record. With six new players joining the team, the Lady Bulldogs will have some adjustments to make for the upcoming season.

"It's the most positive group of girls that I've worked with since I've been coaching," said Julie Torbett, Head Coach of the Lady Bulldogs. They're very positive, very hard working, and they really want to be successful. It's been a really good pre-season."

The Lady Bulldogs are coming off a third place finish in the final standings of the Big South Conference. Coastal Carolina took top honors, with University of Maryland-Baltimore County finishing second. Last year the Big South Conference was ranked 19th out of 30 Division I volleyball conferences.

"It's a strong conference and we have several teams that are always real good. UMBC is always strong and Coastal Carolina should be equally as strong as they were last year," said Coach Torbett.

"I hope we have a really good learning season. I hate to call it a rebuilding year, because every year is a rebuilding year. It's definitely a younger, inexperienced team," said Coach Torbett.

Three seniors, Jenni Reynolds, Sabrina Harrison, and Lorelee Smith, return this year as starters to help lead the Lady Bulldogs. UNCA will be relying on their experience and leadership to have a successful season this year.

"With losing Kim Osborne last year, that is a big loss for us," said Coach Torbett. "I'm hoping Cally Geiger will step in and fill that role offensively."

Geiger, a returning starter, has the potential to be a key player at the midhitter position. Geiger, at 6'2", can be a very strong presence at the net for UNCA.

Lorelee Smith, a returning senior, has been named First Team All-Conference for the past two years. She also led the conference in assists those two years.

"We have the best setter in the conference and in the southeast. She's just phenomenal. The setter is the quarterback of the team, everything revolves around her. She touches the ball on every single play," said Coach Torbett.

Other players expected to make key contributions to the team this year are sophomores Jennifer Baker, Kelly Danielson, Beth Brown, and Chandra Hicks.

The Lady Bulldogs have their work cut out in order to fill the missing holes left by last year's seniors. Six new freshmen join the Lady Bulldogs this season to help fill in those holes.

"The freshmen have all been doing very well. I would be delighted if one of them worked into a starting position," said Coach Torbett.

"At this point we are going to rely on our juniors, seniors, and sophomores to carry us and the freshmen to fill in depth players before they are asked to be impact players."

"This is a whole new level because the game is a lot quicker and reaction time is a lot less," said Kristine Ambrose, an incoming freshmen to the team.

"The girls hit harder and the serves

are harder and tougher to pass as well. The coaching staff here is very helpful and knowledgeable about the game. We all push each other to improve and we have set many goals which we are striving to reach as one," said Ambrose.

This season, the Lady Bulldogs have a new addition to their coaching staff. Courtney Tucker, a starter from last year's team, will join Keith Murrless as an assistant coach for the Lady Bulldogs.

She will have to adapt to the new position off the court, but she brings knowledge and experience to the team.

"I miss playing a lot and standing on the sidelines is very hard, but I love to coach," said Tucker. "I love being on the other side and helping the new people that are here and do whatever I can for those that have been here."

The Lady Bulldogs begin their regular season this Friday as they take on the Catamounts from Western Carolina at the Wake Forest Invitational Tournament in Winston-Salem.

The Lady Bulldogs will also face Appalachian State and Wake Forest at the weekend tournament on Saturday afternoon.

The first home game for the Lady Bulldogs will be on September 9 against High Point.

The Lady Bulldogs will be hosting the Blocksport Bulldog Challenge on Sept. 19 and 20. UNCA will face Providence, Samford, and Belmont in the tournament.

The Big South Conference Championships will also be held this year at UNCA's Justice Center on November 13-15. This will be the first time that UNCA has hosted the tournament in five years.