

Phoenix carries current momentum to matchups with ACC opponents

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Reporter

The Phoenix men's basketball team started last weekend's road trip with a dismal 55-31 loss at Samford University. After that, the team had only 48 hours to prepare for its next game.

On Saturday the Phoenix routed last year's Southern Conference Tournament champion University of Tennessee at Chattanooga, 82-63, which was the team's last game before heading to Winston-Salem, N.C., to take on Atlantic Coast Conference opponent Wake Forest.

Leading the balanced Phoenix scoring attack was junior guard Chris Long with 20 points. Senior forward Adam Constantine and sophomore forward Drew Spradlin also contributed with 14 points each.

The victory against the Mocs gives the Phoenix something to show for its work in the season so far.

"Saturday's win was a very important win for our team," head coach Matt Matheny said. "It gives the team a chance to see that their hard work is paying off."

Constantine said it was extremely important for the Phoenix to earn a SoCon victory on the road. Last season, the Phoenix went 2-8 on the road in the SoCon.

"It doesn't matter where we play," Constantine said. "Every conference victory matters, especially games away from (Alumni Gym)."

The game also meant the end of a four game losing streak.

The next two games for the Phoenix will be against ACC opponents — Wake Forest on Sunday and North Carolina State on Dec. 17.

With no games on the slate between Saturday's victory and the matchup

with the Demon Deacons, Matheny's team has a chance to catch their breath.

The Phoenix practices five times before the game against Wake Forest, which is the longest stretch of practices for the Phoenix since the season began.

"It allows us to go back and reemphasize the basic fundamentals of our offense and defense," Matheny said. "We can go back to our simple drills so that we can polish up."

Matheny said the week of practice will allow his coaching staff the opportunity to review film and correct minute details.

Some emphasis in practices will be on free throw shooting and rebounding, Matheny said. The Phoenix is shooting a paltry 64 percent from the line, and is being outrebounded by 5.6 rebounds per game.

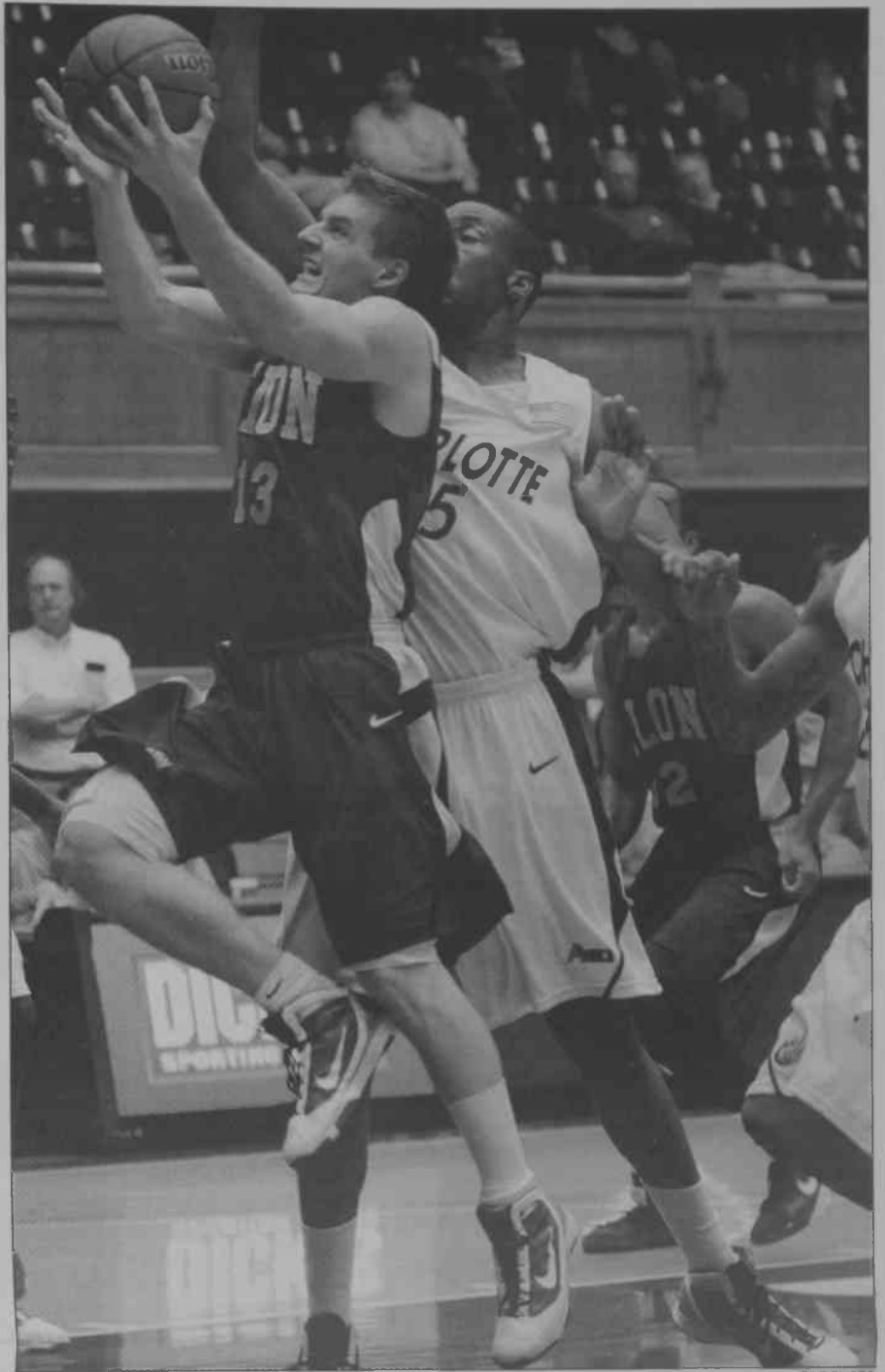
Practicing for a week after a win means the team's spirits will be elevated, sophomore guard Josh Bonney said.

"Our spirits will be up, but we try to bring the same amount of energy (to) every practice," Bonney said.

Matheny said he will do his best to make sure that the Phoenix does not get too far ahead of itself.

"There are a lot of smiling faces right now because our immediate memory is of a very good team effort on Saturday," Matheny said. "When we went in the film room to watch Saturday's game, our first 20 clips were examples of how we're getting better. And then our next 40 clips were mistakes that we made on Saturday."

By watching clips of mistakes made in a 19-point victory, Matheny is continuing to work toward the Phoenix's season goal of getting better every day.



FILE PHOTO
Junior guard Chris Long, left, goes up for a shot in the Nov. 16 loss against University of North Carolina at Charlotte. In the game against The University of Tennessee at Chattanooga, Long had 20 points and nine assists to help propel Elon to a 82-63 victory.

MISSING A YEAR:

Hovatter's love of the game keeps her positive



FILE PHOTO
In Elon's Dec. 14 loss to the Naval Academy, sophomore guard Kallie Hovatter looks to push past Midshipman defenders toward the hoop. Hovatter is a sophomore transfer student who, after sitting out all of last year, has played in all seven of Elon's games so far this season.

Justine Schulerud
Staff Photographer

When women's basketball player Kallie Hovatter puts on the Elon uniform and laces up her shoes, she approaches the court a bit differently than her other teammates. This is Hovatter's first season actually playing with the Phoenix, despite being an academic junior.

Hovatter was a sophomore transfer from St. Joseph's University in Philadelphia, Pa., last year.

According to NCAA rules, Hovatter was forced to sit out a season after arriving at Elon. Despite staying on the bench during her sophomore year, she still had an instant impact on the team, head coach Karen Barefoot said.

Hovatter said her family has had a huge impact on her basketball career.

Influenced by her father and older sister, she had a basketball in her hand for most of her life.

Hovatter has worn the number four throughout her entire basketball career. She said it represents her family because she is one of four children. Also, she plays the game for four main reasons — passion, energy, reward and the love of the game.

Growing up on a farm in Mt. Jackson, Va., Hovatter developed a work ethic long before she stepped onto the court.

"You get your hands dirty, and you got to do that in games sometimes, too, especially with defense," Hovatter said. "You don't stop until the job gets done. You don't ever stop."

Hovatter even compared the team to a farm.

She said last year, the team was in harvest season, and the stock was emerging. This year, they are blasting into the mix of things.

Hovatter has not just made an impact at Elon, but also back home in her community. Coming from a small town where many people attend local schools or do not go to college at all, Hovatter was one of the first athletes to receive a Division I scholarship.

"It was a big deal for me to move forward and receive a DI scholarship," Hovatter said.

She received many honors throughout high school, including being named a three-time

Virginia Player of the Year. She also led her high school team to back-to-back appearances in the semi-final rounds of the Virginia State tournament and holds multiple personal records at her high school, including setting the single-game scoring record with 43 points and leading all players, both men and women, with 2,100 points and 1,000 assists.

Hovatter received multiple scholarship offers, but narrowed down her final selection to St. Joseph's University and the University of Virginia. She picked St. Joseph's with the desire to get out of the Virginia area, but after being there for a year, she knew it was not the right place for her.

"I'm a Southern girl, and the North wasn't the place for me," Hovatter said. "It was definitely a culture shock. I tried it out, and it didn't work."

Hovatter also said the matchup of the team did not fit her playing style. She soon began searching for something more.

Because she had been recruited by Barefoot's previous employer, Old Dominion University in Virginia, Barefoot already knew about Hovatter. When Hovatter heard Barefoot was starting another program elsewhere, she was interested in finding out more.

As soon as the word reached Barefoot that Hovatter was looking for somewhere to transfer, the head coach said she knew she would have to take action quickly because Hovatter would begin receiving many offers once again.

The biggest challenge Hovatter said she faced with the transfer process was having to sit out a season.

Despite not being able to play all season, she still brought a fresh energy to the team.

"She was our sparkplug, and she wasn't even playing," Barefoot said.

Because she could not travel with the team last year, Hovatter made a conscious effort to make it to every away game. At one game, she was even yelled at for being too loud by the referee.

"On and off the court, she brings a lot of energy," sophomore teammate Aiesha Harper said. "She can relate to every single one of us. She is such a positive person and that spreads throughout the team."