

Devils send UNC packing

By the Associated Press

GREENSBORO -- Duke Coach Mike Krzyzewski would like to try a few decorating ideas on the Dean Smith Center when the Blue Devils play their first-round game in the NCAA East Regional at Chapel Hill.

"Hopefully, we can put some royal blue or Duke blue people in those light blue seats," Krzyzewski said in an interview shortly after the announcement of the 64-team tournament field.

The Blue Devils, who won the Atlantic Coast Conference championship by beating North Carolina Sunday, led five of the league's teams into the NCAA basketball tournament and got the additional good news of its berth in Chapel Hill, just 10 miles from home.

The Blue Devils, 24-6, will face Boston University, 23-7, Thursday in the first round of the East Regional at the Dean Smith Center on the University of North Carolina campus. Meanwhile, North Carolina, also 24-6, was sent to the West Regional in Salt Lake City, where it will face North Texas State.

"The tournament committee made a great statement by not just putting people on their home courts unless they felt that they deserved it," Krzyzewski said.

"Although Carolina's had a great year, I think we've earned the right to stay in the East."

Tournament selection committee chairman Arnie Ferrin said the winner of the ACC tournament was going to be seeded in Chapel Hill and the loser would go to Salt Lake City.

The Tar Heels weren't the only ACC team to lose the home-court advantage. Georgia Tech, 21-9, didn't get seeded in the Southeast Regional first round in Atlanta, but instead was bracketed in the East Regional first round at Hartford, where it will face Iowa State of the Big 8 Conference on Friday.

North Carolina State, 24-7, again heads westward, facing Murray State in the Midwest Regional first round at Lincoln, Neb., on Friday. Maryland, which got a first-round ACC tournament victory to enhance its shot at the NCAA, will meet California-Santa Barbara in the first round next Friday in Cincinnati.

In addition to the chance to draw Duke fans to nearby Chapel Hill, Krzyzewski said the Blue Devils need to stay close to home and get some time to heal from the three-day grind of the ACC.

"There are a lot of bumps and bruises. We had so many ice bags out today -- Danny's (Ferry) hand, Quin's (Snyder) leg, Kevin's (Strickland) hip, my head," Krzyzewski said.

"But, it's nicer recovering

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number twos.

"Now they have number nine in the country. That's a help.

"Until the MEAC does better as a league, our berth is going to stay somewhere between 14 and 16. The whole thing is based on how strong your rated -- not records."

Free explained that the RPI (Rating Percentage Index) was probably the heaviest factor in determining a team's tournament status.

"The whole process is quite incredible," he said.

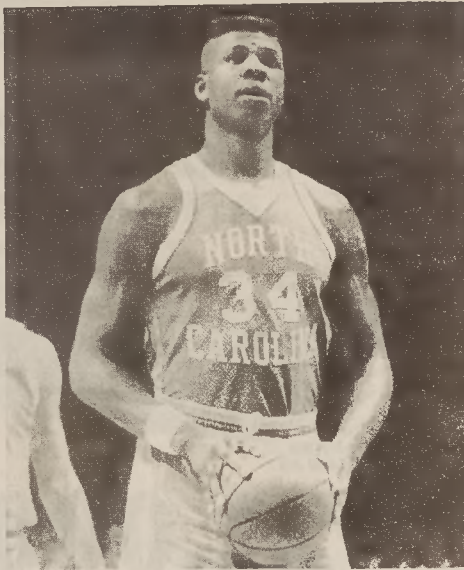
"I was in awe of how well organized the committee was. The staff provided us with all kinds of information. There was an incredible amount of figures to be dealt with.

"I think there might be a few kinks to be worked out. But overall, the system is very credible.

"I can't really think of a better one right now."

Meanwhile the Aggies have a better chance of advancing than they did last year.

Indeed, slim is better than none.



No One At Home

Duke sent J.R. Reid and UNC to Salt Lake City (photo by Santana).

after you've won.

"We needed to be close if we're going to play on Thursday because our team's kind of battered right now, physically and emotionally," he said.

"To travel would really hurt us, so we're pleased to be there."

Georgia Tech sports information director Mike Finn said while the Yellow Jackets don't play all their home games in The Omni, it is in Atlanta and that might have played a factor.

"The committee was very sensitive to that issue this year," Finn said.

Maryland was perceived as one of many teams on the bubble -- a team that could only hold its breath until the selection process was completed. The Terrapins pulled off the surprise of the ACC tournament by defeating Georgia Tech 84-67 before losing in the semifinals to North Carolina.

"I think our schedule really helped us. We won on the road. We played well in non-conference games and our league is no patsy," Maryland Coach Bob Wade said.

The Terrapins are 17-12. North Carolina A&T faces Syracuse Thursday in Chapel Hill.

Lady Rams to open this Sat.

Special To The Chronicle

With a veteran cast of players returning to the fold, the Winston-Salem State University softball team has high expectations for the 1988 season.

Coach Tim Grant welcomes back six starters from last season and looks forward to the addition to several promising newcomers.

After winning the CIAA title in 1986, the Rams fell on hard times and finished with a 3-14 mark last year. However, Grant said he expects his team to return to their old form this time around.

"Our success will depend, to a large degree, on our pitching and catching," said Grant.

"In fast-pitch softball, those are the two biggest factors in determining a team's success. Really, I think we'll be much improved over last year's record."

Melissa Murray, a senior infielder, heads the list of veteran players on the Rams' roster. She finished with a .389 batting average last year and is expected to be the Rams' top hitter.

Jennifer Conrad, a graduate of Reynolds High School, also proved to be one of WSSU's toughest outs. The senior batted .340, scoring 17 runs in 17 games.

Sonya Hurt will shoulder most of the pitching duties, as she started every game for the Rams last year. She gave up 208 hits and 215 runs in 144 innings of work, while striking out eight.

The Rams open the season by traveling to Shaw this Saturday afternoon. The home-opener is this Sunday at 1:00 p.m., where they'll host St. Augustine's at Civitan Park.

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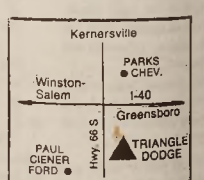
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