

Kilgo's friendship with Rose was close

By James Braswell

Upon walking into John Kilgo's office at Weekly Newspapers, you would probably notice a Purdue basketball schedule posted on the wall behind his desk. On the poster is a picture of Lee Rose, the man — of course — who left UNCC last spring for the West Lafayette, Ind. position. Another

glance would reveal a University of North Carolina pennant. "Go Tar Heels." On the wall to the right of the desk are several UNCC promotion paraphernalia.

Kilgo's office reflects Kilgo and his philosophies about sports. "Lee (Rose) couldn't understand why people would pull for UNCC and Chapel Hill at the

same time." Kilgo said, "I guess I can."

Kilgo has been UNCC's basketball play-by-play announcer for three years, the duration of the 49er Basketball Network's existence (WAYS-AM is the only station on the network). He is hard-nosed, opinionated, and though many of his media peers would not like to admit it, he is successful. He is an outspoken voice in a city overwhelmed by unopinionated (at least not vocally, off the record) media figures.

But does his opinionated lifestyle bump with his job as play-by-play announcer for UNCC? "I don't think it bumps at all," Kilgo explained, "... in the first place, if you're going to do sports commentary, you ought to have an opinion. When you talk about play-by-play, our first year the key thing for us (Jay Thomas and Kilgo) was to get somebody to listen, and to do that I felt like we had to be very different. ... I feel like the second year we were 50 percent more objective in calling the game than the first year." Becoming an on-the-air cheerleader was different — different enough to get the Mean Green ball rolling. "Of course I root for UNCC," Kilgo says, "Nobody wants to listen or root for a team that loses. The regular program (if it weren't for us) would be lousy, the crowds would be lousy and we would all go down the tube. ... Before we broadcasted, UNCC only got five or six graphs in the Observer, they never sent anybody on road trips with the team. (Now, the Observer staffs each of UNCC's games, and UNCC was the only team in the state to have its "game story" placed on the front sports page every time it played).

"Last year anybody could go back and listen to some of the tapes, which I think were the most objective play-by-play of anybody in this state. I know my friend Lee Rose — probably one of the best friends I've got — used to argue with me all the time 'you're coaching, you're coaching!' and that's not objective play-by-play."

Kilgo's friendship with Rose surfaced more, once the latter left for Purdue. It was a close friendship

"Lee (Rose) thought I was crazy and I thought he was crazy. We were both probably right."

— John Kilgo

For UNCC success, Kevin has to be a scoring King

continued from page 1

"Coach Pratt will just be head coach, whereas coach Rose was head coach and athletic director; so he didn't have time for everybody. Coach Pratt, since he was an assistant coach, is more involved with the players. But I don't think things will be that much different after all, really."

When Pratt became head coach,

he hired as assistants Melvin Watkins, who was King's roommate his freshman year, and Bob Nastase, King's high school coach at Lakewood. King is happy about both moves, but he's especially glad to see Nastase coaching him again.

"I thought it was a wonderful idea," he said, "He (Nastase) is more knowledgeable than any coach I know of."

When King started as a freshman, he was often credited with being sound fundamentally and with having a thorough knowledge of basketball. He credited Nastase for developing those traits.

"I learned two main things from him," King said. "I learned discipline, and I learned to think logically."

Last year's 20-7 mark was a let-down for a team that had tasted years of postseason success. The 49ers were young and erratic, capable of beating nationally ranked Florida State and losing to lowly Eastern Montana College.

"The season was sort of a disappointment," King admitted. "We had some problems internally. Sometimes we worked it out and sometimes we didn't." King looks for considerable improvement in this year's squad.

"We're still young, but I think we're experienced enough to have a good year. We'll be more of a team this year, and we'll have more talent than we had last year."

Though he'll no longer be devoting his talents exclusively to defense, King doesn't anticipate slacking off much in that area, either.

"If I'm playing good defense, my points will come. The only way you can score is if you have defense."

King carries a double major in Human Development and Learning, and Black Studies. Counseling is a career area he thinks he'd like if he can't play pro basketball.

"I like to be around kids," he explained. "Before we moved to Lakewood, we lived in Philadelphia, and it wasn't safe at all. There were gangs and stuff I had to watch out for. I'd like to help people so they wouldn't turn out like that."

Pro basketball notwithstanding, King would like to settle in Charlotte after graduation.

"I've been away from home (Lakewood) too long. I would feel uncomfortable there. Charlotte is a nice, medium-sized city. I like it."



Kevin King fires from the corner.



Lee Rose was a frequent guest on John Kilgo's radio show.

as Kilgo explains; there were unique times that the two spent together that never made public — at least while Rose was in Charlotte.

"I'm not saying I could be objective about Lee Rose. I liked him. He was a man who had his values in good order," said Kilgo as he told about one of the experiences he went through with Rose. He recalled a night when he and Rose visited a hospital to see a boy with a terminal illness. That evening, after Rose, Kilgo and their wives had eaten dinner, Rose decided "on the spur of the moment that he wanted to see this kid" Kilgo explained. They visited the hospital, just to visit the boy, an attempt to boost his spirit.

"You should have seen it," Kilgo recalled, "The parents were crying, I got depressed and it just didn't seem the right place to be. Our wives were waiting in the car. But he went in and talked to the kid and ended

staying in there a half-an-hour. He was just that kind of person. ... But he didn't want anything like that in the papers. He didn't want the headlines. ... He's probably the most genuine person I know. It's a shame Charlotte didn't get to know him as a person. He was a totally misunderstood person."

But Kilgo's relationship with Rose wasn't always smooth. They would argue philosophies about sports and about "Chapel Hill." "I thought he was crazy" Kilgo says, "and he thought I was crazy."

Rose is gone, but life goes on for Kilgo. He has a more-than-full-time job carrying the responsibility of putting out eight weekly newspapers, as well as contending with his work for WAYS. But come tonight, you'll hear him pulling for UNCC during his play-by-play announcing.

"I like UNCC," Kilgo confesses, "I'm not ashamed of that."