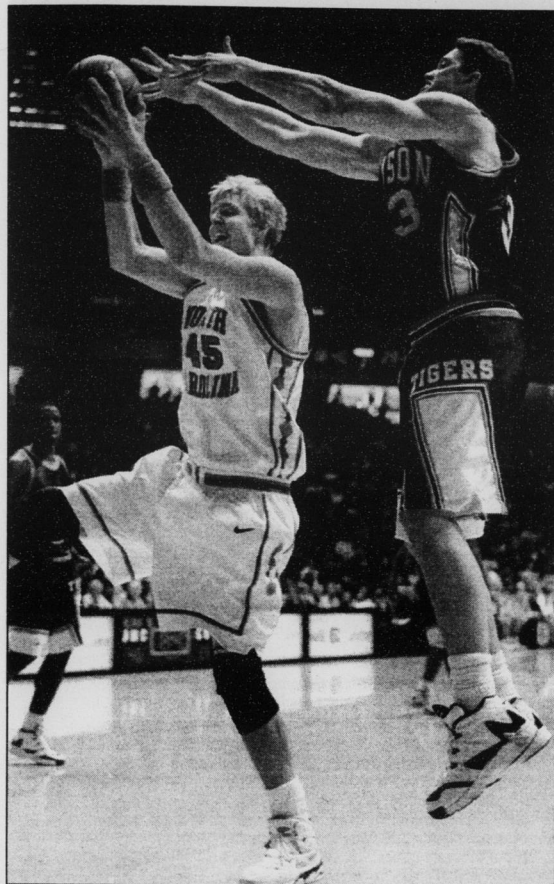


Content with past, Zwikker set for final act



UNC senior Serge Zwikker was a redshirt freshman when the Tar Heels won the national title in 1993. He wants to win a championship on the floor.

BY ALEC MORRISON
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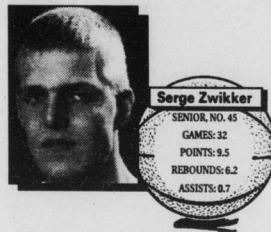
North Carolina center Serge Zwikker says he wouldn't rewrite his career at UNC, but the first act still lingers in his mind.

Zwikker was a freshman redshirting his first year in Chapel Hill when the Tar Heels captured the NCAA Championship in 1993. He stood on the floor of the Louisiana Superdome in New Orleans sporting a suit and tie, not one of the blue and white uniforms that adorned his teammates.

And while he celebrated with the rest of them, he still wants his shot at winning on the floor. After all, the prevalent NCAA image for Zwikker right now is that of an ugly 92-73 loss to Texas Tech in the second round of the 1996 NCAA Tournament.

"There's no way of trying to turn back the clock," Zwikker said. "You only have a couple chances, you know, like I've realized this is my last time. If we don't make it this time, there will never be another time for me."

Zwikker may not be the most athletic player on UNC's roster, but he has memories and experience unmatched by his teammates. So his goal for the upcoming season is simple: Use that experience to help educate his teammates on how to get the Tar Heels back to the Final Four. Lofty goal? Definitely. But Zwikker



has done nothing short of exceed expectations since his arrival four years ago. Few, if any, could have predicted in 1993 that Zwikker would enter his senior season with a year's worth of starting experience at UNC.

The starting job was never supposed to be his. The day after UNC won the national title in '93, Tar Heel coach Dean Smith paid a visit to Rasheed Wallace at his Philadelphia home. He was recruiting Wallace for the job Zwikker holds now. But Wallace's early departure to the NBA at the end of the 1994-95 season put Zwikker in a position he had only dreamed of before.

And the Netherlands native has made the most of it, blocking the lane with his massive 7-foot-2 frame on defense and demonstrating a soft touch for a big man on offense. Zwikker averaged 9.5 points per game last season and was money from close range.

Zwikker is not a physical center in the mold of Wallace or Wake Forest standout Tim Duncan, but he has the touch that UNC needs to produce points in the paint.

"Duncan and (Duke's Greg) Newton are the kind that bother him... because of their extreme quickness," Smith said. "Maybe he can learn true finesse to make up for that."

But Zwikker needs at least a little of his opponents' quickness this season. Smith plans a return to the pressure defense that has been the trademark of UNC teams in years past, and the Tar Heel coach needs a center who can show some speed on the floor.

Of course, it's tough to move fast when you're 7-2. But Zwikker says he's trying nonetheless.

"I'm very comfortable with (the pressure defense)," he said. "I've been working hard on it this summer, and I'm going to be ready when we start. So far I think I've done all right in practice. I'm trying to show Coach Smith that I can do it."

Zwikker opted to redshirt in 1992-93 in part because UNC's lineup was loaded with talented big men. That decision now gives him a chance to help redeem a team that failed to reach the Sweet Sixteen last season for only the second time in 17 years. In a sense, he has everything going for him: a defined role at center, junior

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