

Netters Look to Rebound From Losing Season

By **ROLAND HOFFMAN**
Staff Writer

Experience will be key for the North Carolina men's tennis team this season. The Tar Heels return four regulars from a year ago, including seniors Assaf

Drori and Aron Breziner and juniors David Cheatwood and Chad Riley.

Senior Tripp Phillips also returns this year after sitting out all of last season with a shoulder injury.

UNC looks to build on that experience and recover from last season's disap-

pointing 11-14 record, which included a 3-5 mark in the ACC.

"Last year we had a real shaky beginning and then came together at the end and did a little better," said Drori, the Tar Heels' No. 2 singles player. "We just need to believe right from the start that we can do well."

The good start the Tar Heels are looking for should be sparked by Phillips' return. Phillips is off to a 2-2 start at No. 1 singles, and his 3-1 mark in doubles with Marcio Petrone has helped lift the Tar Heels open the year 3-1.

"Tripp has been a great leader for us," UNC coach Sam Paul said. "He's been working extremely hard, and he's definitely ready."

Senior tri-captains Phillips, Drori and Breziner will help the five new Tar Heels, including Petrone, a sophomore transfer from Florida International, stay focused through the season. Freshmen Trystan Meniane and Greg Archer will have a chance to make an impact in the lineup.

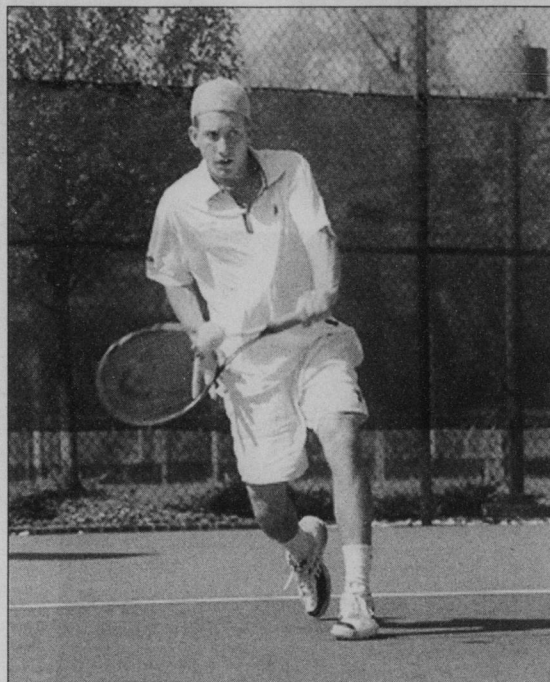
"Most of the guys are freshmen and sophomores, and I feel like I have an added responsibility," Drori said. "I just try to get the guys going because we have such a great team."

If the Tar Heels are going to recover from their first losing season in 13 years, they will have to do it against a difficult schedule. UNC will face 13 opponents ranked in the top 70 nationally. That group includes seven of the eight teams the Tar Heels will take on in ACC play.

Duke, the No. 3 team in the country, is the front runner to win the conference, and Virginia also has a strong team. Even with the difficult conference schedule, Paul said he feels that his team



No. 1 singles player **Tripp Phillips** returns to the UNC lineup after sitting out 1999 with a shoulder injury.



DTH/SEAN BUSHNER

Senior Assaf Drori, a tri-captain on the UNC men's tennis team, enters his second season with the Tar Heels after transferring from New Mexico.

can do well and compete with any team in the conference.

"We can play with all of them if we keep working hard," Paul said. "We can win the conference."

This year's team must also play better away from home. In 1999, UNC struggled away from the Cone-Kenfield Tennis Center. The Tar Heels posted a 9-4 home record but were only 1-7 on the road.

UNC has gotten off to a strong start

this year. It swept Campbell and Furman and tallied a 4-3 victory against Purdue. The only blemish thus far is a 6-1 loss against No. 20 Texas.

This year's early success and last year's struggles have allowed the Tar Heels to gain much-needed playing experience. Because of Phillips' injury last season, Cheatwood received his first chance to play high in the lineup. Drori played in his first year with UNC last year after transferring from New Mexico.

Phillips said this year's team is more experienced and more talented than the squad from a year ago.

"The talent is definitely there," Phillips said. "I was on the team when we were No. 12 in the country, and I think this team has as much talent. It's just a question of getting some guys experienced and getting guys match tough."

Men's Tennis



UNC men's tennis coach **Sam Paul**

Feb. 19	Brown	1 p.m.
March 3	Texas A&M	2:30 p.m.
March 8	UNC-Charlotte	2:30 p.m.
March 14	at South Carolina	2:30 p.m.
March 18	at Florida State	1 p.m.
March 23	Wake Forest	2:30 p.m.
March 25	Notre Dame	1 p.m.
March 28	N.C. State	2:30 p.m.
April 1	VCU	1 p.m.
April 8	Georgia Tech	1 p.m.
April 9	Clemson	1 p.m.
April 12	at Duke	2:30 p.m.
April 15	at Virginia	1 p.m.
April 16	at Maryland	11 a.m.
April 20-23	ACC Championships in Atlanta, Ga.	

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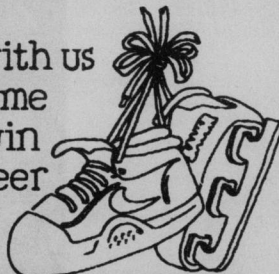
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