

CONTRAST From Page 14

the NCAA's first round, Florida whizzed past Illinois, Duke and Oklahoma State to arrive in Indianapolis for its second Final Four.

Now one of the most storied programs in college basketball history awaits. Venerable, old North Carolina and Guthridge wait.

Guthridge, too, made it to the Final Four as a player. He watched from the bench as Kansas State lost in the 1958 Final Four his sophomore year and then took the long road to coaching.

After a stint as a high school coach in Kansas, Guthridge was an assistant coach for 35 years - the first five under Tex Winters at Kansas State, the last 30 under Dean Smith at UNC. No wonder he preaches loyalty, a quality that comes with age.

It's also one that manifests itself in trying times, such as those Guthridge and the Tar Heels faced early this season. Predictably, Guthridge took the fall for his players. Predictably, they took the blame for him.

"This team's been very resilient," he said. "That's what made me feel good and also made me feel disappointed that I couldn't get them going in the right direction earlier."

Said Donovan: "It took them a little bit longer to gel and to mesh and to be at the point that they're at right now. But they're playing great basketball. Bill Guthridge has done a terrific job."

The key to the turnaround has been UNC's improved defense. But unlike the Gators, who go 10 deep, the Tar Heels are limited by a smaller bench. So Guthridge moved to the zone - the anti-press.

Unlike the frenzied offense of Florida, the Tar Heels' offense is predicated on getting the best possible shot. It is Smith's offense, adjusted slightly throughout the years. Instead of the 3-pointer, it concentrates on getting the ball inside.

And at North Carolina, freshmen play sparingly. Few start, and those who do usually turn out to be NBA stars, like Michael Jordan and James Worthy. Even they wait behind the seniors in the buffet line and carry around the green bag filled with medical supplies.

While traditions and playing styles and experience levels differ, the coaches - and their teams as an extension - are just branches off of different basketball family trees: Donovan from the Pitino branch, Guthridge from the Smith legacy.

"(Donovan) played under Rick Pitino, and you can tell some of that carries over just like some of the guys that coach now that came from here have a little bit of coach Smith and coach Guthridge in them, like Buzz Peterson and Matt Doherty," Newby said.

"When I watch those teams play, it just reminds me of the old Carolina that I used to watch growing up.

"You can just tell the family whatever carries over, what you learn here, you carry on for the rest of your life."

There is no way to change what branch you come from.

Loyalty - to a system, a style of play. Saturday the press meets the zone, youthful exuberance meets veteran precision, impatience meets loyalty. New Wave meets Old School.

No matter which one wins, the other won't change. It's in them.

The Sports Editor can be reached at sports@unc.edu.

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UNC's Recent History Lacks Fond Memories

The Tar Heels have failed to advance to the NCAA title game in their previous three Final Four appearances.

By BRIAN MURPHY Senior Writer

Brendan Haywood thought about it for a moment.

He paused. Finally, he answered. "I don't know," North Carolina's junior center said. "That was kind of short. We were only there for one game."

There was the 1998 Final Four in San Antonio, where the top-ranked Tar Heels were upset by Utah in the national semifinals. The game was Antawn Jamison and Vince Carter's last in Carolina blue.

UNC's appearance in this weekend's Final Four marks the 15th for the program, more than any other school. And while the Tar Heels have walked away with three national championships, their most recent efforts - including 1998, their last opportunity - have been disappointments.

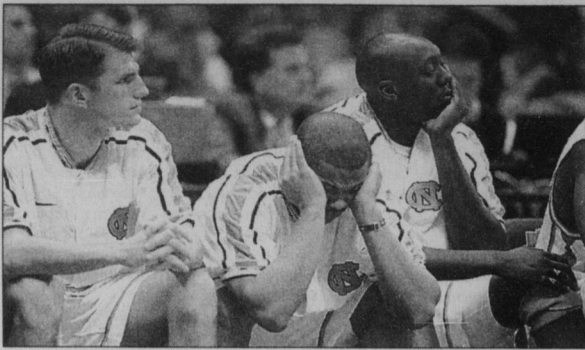
Off the Mark

North Carolina's star shooters have struggled in the team's last three trips to the Final Four. Shammond Williams was a combined 3-for-25 in his two tries, and Dante Calabria was 1-for-10.

Table with columns: Player, Min, FG, FT, Reb, TO, A, F, 3FG, Pts. Rows: Shammond Williams, 1997; Shammond Williams, 1998; Dante Calabria, 1995.

SOURCE: PROBABLY NOT NEWS SERVICES

DITH/T JAY RICHARDS



The Tar Heels react to being bounced from the Final Four in 1998. Center Brendan Haywood said the team's attitude would be different this year.

"I've been to two Final Fours before, and I've had two bad experiences," said senior point guard Ed Cota, who was at the helm for UNC's one-game appearances in 1997 and '98.

But this year's postseason run differs from Cota's previous two marches to the Final Four. In 1997, North Carolina carried a 16-game winning streak to

Indianapolis only to lose to eventual national champion Arizona. The following season, the Tar Heels were the consensus pick to ride out of San Antonio with the fourth national title in school history.

"We walked in, and our chests were a little bit bigger. We were expected to be there. Actually, we were expected to win it," Haywood said. "So we came with just that, 'Yeah, we know what we're here to do' confidence."

This year, it's different.

"We're coming in with that, 'Whew, we made it,'" Haywood said. "No one expected us to be here, so we're coming in with that underdog role, 'Hey, no one expects us to win, so let's go out there and play hard and what happens, happens.'"

What happens, as evidenced by the Utes' shocker in '98, is often unexpected. On the brightest stage in college basketball, players and teams react differently.

Sometimes they star. In 1982, James Worthy delivered 28 points and Michael Jordan canned the famous jumper from the left wing to give former UNC coach Dean Smith his first national championship. Donald Williams hit five 3-pointers and scored 25 points to lift the Tar Heels past Michigan for their last crown in 1993.

But sometimes, they disappear under the glow of the lights. In UNC's last three losses, a Tar Heel shooter has failed to deliver. Small forward Dante Calabria went 1-of-10 from the floor, 0-for-7 from 3-point range and scored just two points in North Carolina's loss to Arkansas in 1995.

Shammond Williams, fairly or not, will always be remembered for his dismal shooting in two Final Fours. In 1997, he was 1-of-13 from the floor, including 1-of-8 from 3-point range. He scored three points against Arizona, dooming UNC in Smith's final contest as head coach.

Against Utah the next year, Williams again misfired. He connected on 2-of-12 shots (1-of-9 from behind the arc) and finished with seven points.

Given those shooting performances, current shooting guard Joseph Forte has been asked all week about his shooting touch.

"I don't pay too much attention to that because I don't think it means anything to me, personally," said Forte, whose 28 points carried the Tar Heels

past Tulsa and into the Final Four. "It's a new year."

And another chance for UNC to change its luck in the RCA Dome, site of this weekend's festivities. North Carolina is 0-2 in the Final Four in Indianapolis.

The Tar Heels dropped a 79-73 decision to Kansas in the 1991 Final Four. The game is remembered for Smith's ejection in the final minutes.

"I was really disappointed in the way it all evolved," said UNC coach Bill Guthridge, who will be involved in his 14th Final Four as a player, assistant coach and head coach.

"It was bush league for Dean to be kicked out. All he was asking was, 'How much time do I have?' It was in bad taste, and I think 99 percent of the people think so."

But the Tar Heels refuse to allow previous disappointments to cloud the achievement of making it to the NCAA tournament's final weekend.

"Making it to the Final Four is not like, 'Oh, hey, I'm back,'" said Haywood, who added he was more of a "spectator" in '98. "Cota" wants to get to the championship game and get a chance to compete for the national title.

Said senior point guard Terrence Newby, "I've been one of the lucky guys to go three out of the four years - not many people can say they did that."

"I just hope the third time is the charm, and I can get that national championship."

The Sports Editor can be reached at sports@unc.edu.

Gators' Miller Cleared To Play Against UNC

Florida's Mike Miller said a sports agent had called him at least 45 times since the beginning of September.

Associated Press

INDIANAPOLIS - Florida officials cleared forward Mike Miller to play in the Final Four after determining he made no improper contact with an agent who called him 45 times since last September.

"This is not a major problem," coach Billy Donovan said Thursday when the team arrived in Indianapolis. "There are no issues with Mike Miller, no issues eligibility wise. He's going to play. To harp on it would take away from what this team has accomplished and what it's trying to do."

In a story Thursday, The New York Times reported agent Andy Miller could have broken laws in Tennessee and Florida by calling Miller and Tennessee guard Tony Harris.

Mike Miller acknowledged that the

agent called him at least 45 times since Sept. 1 and that they had spoken at least 20 times.

The agent, who is not related to the player, is not registered to practice as an agent in either state, which both have agent laws.

"At least theoretically, this is a violation of Florida law," said Bill Cervone, assistant state attorney in Florida. "It's something that has to be looked into. So far, nothing has been brought to our attention."

Police at the University of Florida said they had received information about the case from the Florida compliance office and had assigned an investigator.

Athletic Director Jeremy Foley said the sophomore forward did nothing to compromise his eligibility.

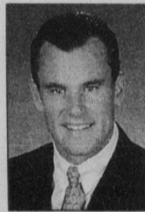
"We're here to win a national championship," Foley said, "not talk about agents."

Said Miller, "I have not violated any NCAA rules, and my total focus is on getting ready to play North Carolina in the Final Four."

The news broke soon after Donovan lectured his players on the distractions awaiting them at the Final Four.

"This isn't a distraction to us because Mike didn't do anything wrong," guard Kenyan Weaks said, repeating the mantra to several reporters who interviewed him.

Tennessee Athletic Director Doug Dickey released a statement saying Harris had acknowledged talking to the agent about 12 times.



Florida coach Billy Donovan said there were no eligibility issues with sophomore Mike Miller.

THE LOWDOWN ON SATURDAY'S BIG TEN CLASH. Game: Wisconsin vs. Michigan State. Time: 5:42 p.m. Location: RCA Dome, Indianapolis. Television: CBS. Series Record: Michigan State leads 60-47 and holds a 3-0 edge this season. Keys for Wisconsin: The Badgers might be the best defensive team in the nation (55.8 ppg allowed), and they need to play like it to have a chance. They must make Cleaves beat them with his own shot instead of letting him create opportunities for teammates, especially Peterson. Keys for Michigan State: The Spartans must avoid falling into the trap of sluggishness and poor shot selection that Wisconsin has forced on other teams. The Badgers have taken away their opponents' top scoring threats all tournament, so Bell and Cleaves need to help Peterson on the perimeter. Wisconsin Bench: Guard Roy Boone came off the bench to score 12 points in 16 minutes in the Elite Eight against Purdue. The Badgers will need another unlikely hero - perhaps swingman Duany Duany or forward Charlie Wills - to beat Michigan State. Michigan State Bench: The Spartans are deep, with five reserves averaging at least 10 minutes. Duke transfer Mike Chappell can shoot from outside, and Jason Richardson helps out on the boards. Prediction: Michigan State 64, Wisconsin 52. Compiled by T. Nolan Hayes.

PRESS

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going to wear on Ed."

Cota has played 159 of 160 possible minutes in the Tar Heels' tournament games and was visibly exhausted in UNC's last game, a 59-55 win against Tulsa. If North Carolina wants to reach the championship game, Cota will need help. And he knows it.

The senior point guard acknowledged that Forte and Capel were "probably going to do more dribbling than

me." Regardless of who handles the ball, the Tar Heels will have a problem because they play seven or eight guys while the Gators will be nine or 10 players deep.

"We want to play our style of play and impose our will on other teams," Florida's Kenyan Weaks said. "I think that if we can do that against North Carolina, because they're not a deep basketball team, we have a good chance of winning."

If the Tar Heels get into an up-and-down race with Florida, the Gators

might wear them out before halftime. The key for UNC to stay fresh and stay in the game will be to break the initial press and hang on to the ball.

Once that's accomplished, the Tar Heels can set up the half-court offense and dictate the tempo. That's what got them this far in the tournament.

"They want to see you keep playing hurry-up and run-and-gun-type style," Haywood said. "But that's not what you want to do against Florida because they have the bodies that eventually, in the end, they're going to win."

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