

UNC Adds Crawley As Coach

Sylvia Crawley, who helped the Tar Heels win the 1994 NCAA title, returns as an assistant to Sylvia Hatchell.

By **BRET STRELOW**
Assistant Sports Editor

Sylvia Crawley doesn't expect everyone to understand.

Only she knows the affinity she has for North Carolina. So she can justify turning down at least five offers to play professionally overseas.

Crawley's decision to accept an assistant coaching position for the women's basketball team at UNC was really an elementary one.

"I feel like this is the chance of a lifetime," Crawley said. "I'd be almost crazy to pass it up. Only a Carolina graduate would understand the decision that I made."

Crawley joined the women's basketball staff Tuesday. She graduated from UNC in 1994 and recently finished her first season with the Portland Fire of the WNBA.

Crawley agreed to a contract that will allow her to play in the WNBA during the summer.

"The University was able to work out for me to do both," Crawley said. "It meant a lot to me."

Crawley said the salaries offered to her to play overseas were at least four times the amount she will be paid to serve as an assistant coach.

Crawley averaged 11.5 points and 6.0 rebounds for the Fire this season. She played for 2 1/2 years in the defunct ABL and won the league's first slam-dunk championship in 1998, when she made a blind-folded jam.

Crawley was a captain for the Tar Heels when they won the national championship in 1994. Her jersey has been honored by UNC and hangs in the rafters at Carmichael Auditorium. "She's just a tremendous representative, not just for women's basketball, but for the University of North Carolina," UNC coach Sylvia Hatchell said.

An assistant coaching position opened up on June 22 when former assistant Ann Hancock was named the head coach at UNC-Wilmington.

Crawley said she will work with the Tar Heels' post players. She will learn what her other duties are at a meeting with the staff Friday.

Crawley, 27, thinks she has an advantage over many assistants in the country because she is young enough to relate to the players. She also knows what it takes to get to the WNBA and how those organizations view the program at North Carolina.

"When the WNBA was selecting me," Crawley said, "they automatically knew I would be disciplined, I would be responsible, and I would be classy."

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



Nikki Teasley, left, and Jackie Higgins, right, will not play for UNC this season. Higgins averaged 10.2 points and 8.1 rebounds per game.

DTH/KATHERINE EAKER

Higgins Exits Early for Pros

Women's basketball forward Jackie Higgins has signed with a Spain-based agent, intending to play overseas.

By **MATT TERRY**
Assistant Sports Editor

Nikki Teasley isn't the only North Carolina veteran jumping ship prior to the beginning of the women's basketball season.

Jackie Higgins, a 6-foot forward, announced that she has signed with an agent and thereby forfeited her senior season of collegiate eligibility. Unlike Teasley, who plans to return in 2001, Higgins has finished her career at UNC.

"I have enjoyed my two years at the University of North Carolina," Higgins, a former star at Durham's Hillside High, said in a released statement on Tuesday. "Playing international basketball will allow me to play the game I love while helping to provide for my family."

"I appreciate the support that the UNC coaching staff and my teammates have given me in this decision. I want to

make it clear that I fully intend to complete my undergraduate degree."

Higgins' agent, Eve Fields, who also represented new North Carolina assistant coach Sylvia Crawley, is based in Spain. She will look to land Higgins on a European club.

"She has narrowed the options down to a couple of different countries, but she hasn't signed with any team yet," UNC coach Sylvia Hatchell said.

Higgins, who is on vacation and was unavailable for comment, was attending summer school when she made the decision to leave the program, Hatchell said. She said Higgins' grades were not a factor in her decision to turn professional.

"She was definitely NCAA, ACC and UNC eligible," Hatchell said. Hatchell said Higgins' decision came



North Carolina coach Sylvia Hatchell said Higgins was attending summer school when she decided to turn pro.

as no surprise to her, and she counts on her incoming freshmen to fill the void left by Higgins.

"We'd been talking about it for some time," Hatchell said of Higgins' departure. "She decided to do what's best for her and her family."

Higgins, who transferred to UNC after her freshman season at Louisburg Junior College, averaged 8.2 points and 5.1 rebounds per game as a sophomore.

Following a junior season in which those averages jumped to 10.2 and 8.1, respectively, Higgins was named the team's most improved player for the 1999-2000 season.

Higgins had one of her best games as a Tar Heel on Jan. 16 at Wake Forest, where she scored 15 points and pulled down 14 rebounds in a 69-56 loss. She hit a game-winning 3-pointer against the Demon Deacons on Feb. 17.

"I understand why she is pursuing this opportunity at this time," Hatchell said. "I know she'll be a success at the next level, and I'm happy she plans to finish her degree."

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

Larsen Joins Women's Lacrosse Coaches

Staff Report

Most programs would be content to steal away an assistant coach from one of their conference rivals, but the North Carolina women's lacrosse team went further by hiring a Duke assistant

UNC ROUNDUP

coach Jenny Slinguff Levy announced Monday that Jennifer Larsen, who has spent the last two years on the sidelines of Duke's field hockey team as an assistant, will join the staff.

Larsen also coached for the field

hockey and women's lacrosse programs at Georgetown from 1996-98. Larsen played at Virginia in both sports.

"She brings great experience as a coach at Duke and Georgetown," Slinguff Levy said. "She also has good playing experience in both field hockey and lacrosse at Virginia. She'll be a great fit for our program."

Larsen will work with the Tar Heel defensive unit and assist in recruiting and administrative areas.

Tar Heels No. 1 in Preseason Poll

In the inaugural ranking of the American Soccer Writers' Preseason

Top 25 Poll, the defending national champion North Carolina women's soccer team claimed all 24 first-place votes.

ASW is a collection of professional writers from across the United States, representing each region and almost 30 publications. The poll is an attempt to have an Associated Press-style ranking of the best women's soccer programs.

Santa Clara slid into the second spot while Notre Dame secured the third slot. Penn State and Nebraska rounded out the top five of the ranking.

Clemson (eighth), Wake Forest (12th), Virginia (15th), Duke (20th) and Maryland (24th) also earned rankings.



Former UNC center Sylvia Crawley averaged 11.5 points and 6.0 rebounds for the Portland Fire of the WNBA this year.

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