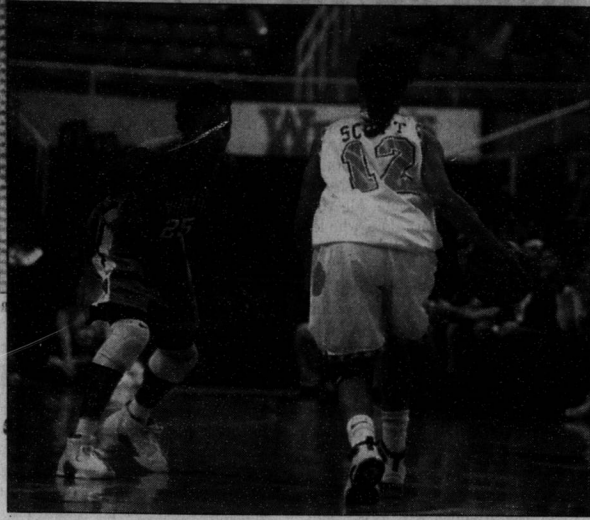


Brown Mulls Over Options as UNC Career Closes Out



DTH/KATHERINE EAKER

UNC guard Juana Brown (left) is one of the ACC's best defenders. She has recorded at least 50 steals in each of her three seasons.

By WILL KIMMEY
Sportsaturday Editor

Juana Brown isn't quite sure what her future holds.

The senior guard has all kinds of plans for when her career at North Carolina ends. Playing in the WNBA ranks near the top of that list, but there's plenty more.

"I do want to play professional basketball, but my first thing I want to get involved with is television commentating," Brown says. "That's my first love. I'm just a television person. When the cameras are rolling, I light up."

Brown already has a few offers for TV internships after the next WNBA season ends and says her dream would be to cover women's basketball side-by-side with ESPN and ABC commentator Robin Roberts.

If basketball is out of the picture, Brown wants to go to culinary school and open her own restaurant. She loves to cook (her specialty is a three-cheese penne pasta), which sets up another of her passions.

"I love to eat,"

Brown says. "That's like my favorite thing to do is eat. I love good food. I'm just glad I'm an athlete and work out or else I'd be probably be like 300 pounds by now."

Her long-shot career choice involves attending mortuary school. She'd like to open a funeral home that helps families cope with their grief. The idea was spurred by a two-year period in her life when several of Brown's relatives passed away. She wasn't pleased with how her family was treated and would like to improve upon that.

With all those ideas floating around in her head, it would seem Brown might not have time to concentrate on basketball. For most of the off-season, she didn't.

"I didn't work out over the summer



Senior guard Juana Brown would like to pursue a broadcasting career and also attempt to play pro basketball.

hardly," she says. "I take that time out to work mentally. I see a lot of players who get burned out playing basketball, and I know it's something that I don't want to do year-round because I like that fresh feeling of a new season coming."

Brown, one of UNC's three captains and its only fourth-year starter, needs to be fresh this season because she figures to be a key scorer and team leader. Her burden got even heavier when point guard Nikki Teasley and forward Jackie Higgins, who would have been seniors, left the team.

But Brown isn't worried. She says that the team still has plenty of talent and that her role will mostly be to provide guidance for the younger players.

Serving as a team leader shouldn't be much trouble for Brown, who has already assumed a variety of different personalities on court. She was known as "Shut 'em Down Brown" for her defensive exploits at the ACC Tournament as a freshman. Then, as a sophomore, she earned the moniker "Downtown Juana Brown" by connecting on 40 percent of her 3-point attempts (64-of-160) and

averaging 14.6 points per game.

Last year was a bit disappointing for Brown, however. She shot a career-worst 34 percent from the field, and her scoring average dropped to 10.3 per contest. There were no fancy nicknames; Brown was just down.

Brown hopes to change that this season. Her stroke has improved from last season, and she's looking more like the marksman she used to be.

"Juana is looking great," sophomore Coretta Brown said. "I remember watching her play her freshman year, and I think she's getting the old mentality back. Her shot is looking great this year."

If Brown regains her scoring touch and combines that with her defensive skills while increasing her rebound totals for the fourth straight season, she might just earn a new nickname: "All-Around Brown."

"It's the last year and hopefully I can put the whole package together," Brown says. "Last year I was looking toward doing that, but it didn't work out too well. I've got another year of experience under my belt, and hopefully I can put it all together."

Allen Works to Get Fit, Increase Role on Team

By MATT TERRY
Assistant Sportsaturday Editor

It seems kind of redundant to say that a 6-foot-5 women's basketball player is going to have a large role on her team.

But North Carolina's LaShonda Allen — and her 77-inch-long frame — are helping to replace former center Jackie Higgins in the Tar Heel starting lineup this season.

Higgins, who forfeited her senior year of eligibility to try to start a professional career in Europe, averaged 10.2 points and 8.1 rebounds per game last season. Both Allen and 6-6 freshman Candace Sutton will see time in the middle for the Tar Heels, with Sutton probably getting the starting nod at the beginning of the season.

Allen, who averaged about two points and two rebounds during her sophomore year last season, is focusing first on regaining her fitness.

Allen has been slow to get back into playing shape and is gradually recovering. Adding insult to injury — or, more appropriately, injury to injury — Allen recently had her tonsils removed, setting her back a couple of days.

Such concerns have quashed some of the excitement Allen might have had about her added responsibility.

"I guess once I start making my runs, once I feel like I'm making my mile (time requirement) and doing what I'm supposed to do, then I'll get excited," Allen said. "But I've just got to get down to business."

Her teammates have been empathetic to her struggles but are counting on production from the only other center on the roster with significant experience.

"She's doing well, but she's been sick," forward Jennifer Thomas said. "But I think that when November rolls around, she's going to be in the full

swing of things and ready to go."

At practices, Allen has been running — and running and running — under the direction of assistant coach Andrew Calder in an attempt to get back into shape.

"I love especially Coach Calder because he really knows the game," Allen said. "He's always there with us, and he jokes with us. When it's time to work hard, he'll push you until you're ready to just pass out. And I really respect him for that."

Allen said she worked hard during the off-season to improve all aspects of her game, especially her defense. But that doesn't mean she plans to change the way she plays the game.

She accumulated 73 personal fouls in 318 minutes last season — that's one foul about every 4 minutes and 21 seconds. Such intensity won Allen the team's hustle award last season.

"Oh, I still foul," Allen said. "It's just now, I'm stronger, and I can stop quicker. I won't be just running over people like I used to. But I'm still going to dive and foul and do the things I do."

Having two players 6-5 or taller will certainly be an advantage for UNC this season, but Allen doesn't see the Tar Heels struggling against smaller, quicker opponents.

"One of our goals is to be the most conditioned team in the country," she said. "We've been running so much that we (the big players) are going to be right up there with the guards. We're going to be right up there with anybody."



Junior center LaShonda Allen started 16 games last year but averaged just 10.6 minutes of playing time.

Sharp Plans to Diversify Scoring Scheme

Guard Leah Sharp attempted 169 shots from the field last season, 128 of which came from behind the 3-point arc.

By RACHEL CARTER
Assistant Sports Editor

Leah Sharp's 3-pointers have been the hallmark of her game.

Sharp led North Carolina her freshman and junior seasons with 42.4-percent and 36.7-percent 3-point shooting averages, respectively.

But this year, the senior guard from Oak Ridge, Tenn., is looking to add to her offensive arsenal.

"Last season, the 3-pointer was my main focus, shooting the 3," said Sharp, who averaged 4.6 points per game last season. "That's what the coaches wanted me to work on last year."

"I guess now I have to add a new dimension to the game because if they stop the 3-point shot, I'll have to have a counter to that."

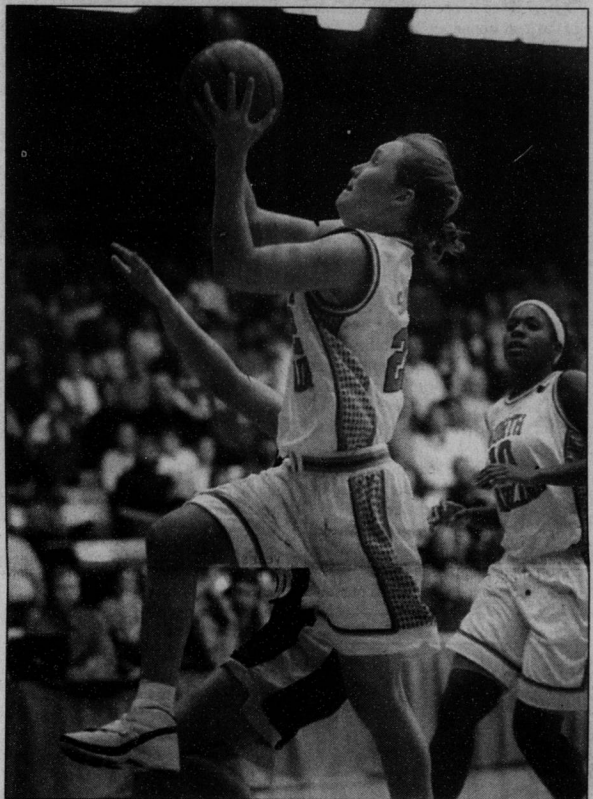
Sharp's focus in the off-season was shooting off the dribble and working on her defense.

"We worked on conditioning over the summer," she said. "We worked on all-around everything. Ball handling, defense, just everything."

She got a lot of that work in during the team's Australia summer trip and a session of summer school. But as she did last summer, Sharp went to a familiar source to practice her game.

While at home in Tennessee, Sharp would get up at 7 a.m. and go to Oak Ridge High School to work out with other college athletes who graduated from Sharp's alma mater.

"We worked out together conditioning-wise, and then we'd shoot some time during the day," Sharp said. "A lot of times we'd play pickup at night."



DTH/MILLER PEARSALL

Senior Leah Sharp will attempt more two-point field goals off the dribble, such as the layup shown here, this season as she expands her game.

Playing for Oak Ridge taught Sharp about being a role player, which she has used to her advantage during her career at North Carolina.

While her numbers aren't as impres-

sive as forward LaQuanda Barksdale or guard Juana Brown's statistics, Sharp is a hardworking, dependable player for the Tar Heels.

One assistant coach for the Tar Heels

said she sees a lot of herself in Sharp.

"When I played here, I was a role player," said former Tar Heel Sylvia Crawley, a WNBA player who is entering her first year as an assistant for UNC.

"I was just consistent. I gave you about 12, 14 points consistently, and I'm in the pros now because I was consistent and because I had a good attitude, and I see that in Leah," Crawley said.

"I think (Barksdale) and Juana will see some of the coaches up here, they'll be a little stressed about getting that 20, 25 points. Sometimes they'll make it, and sometimes they won't, but Leah will consistently give you her 10."

For Sharp, playing the role assigned to her isn't that difficult — she said she knows she was recruited to fill a certain spot of an outside threat.

She hit 47-of-128 3-pointers last season. But those 3-pointers were the majority of her game. Sharp hit only 11 more shots in the year, finishing 58-for-169. She was also successful from the foul line, shooting 70 percent on 33 attempts.

Sharp's role in her years as a Tar Heel has steadily increased, but this year will require even more from her.

Scoring voids exist in the UNC lineup with in the absences of Nikki Teasley and Jackie Higgins, so Sharp will have to increase her point output. As one of the team's three captains, Sharp will also have to provide leadership to help UNC during the season.

"My goals (my freshman year) were that I just wanted to help the team as much as I could. Obviously, my freshman and sophomore years I didn't get that much of a chance to," Sharp said. "That obviously was not expected, and I had to deal with that as it came. Last year, I saw the court a lot more. I was a starter and a captain."

"I guess it was a lot easier to fulfill that role because it was expected of me last year. This year, I guess it's an even bigger role."

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