

Depleted Men's Hoops Faces Challenges

Forwards Jason Capel and Kris Lang and the freshmen look to offset the heavy losses from last year's team.

By RACHEL CARTER
Sports Editor

Maybe the media's preseason dismissal of the North Carolina's men's basketball team is most telling. Maybe it's the 107-76 exhibition loss to the EA Sports All-Stars. Maybe it's the underdog feeling that rings in its players' voices.

Maybe it's that the Tar Heels lost their two leading scorers to the NBA. Maybe it's that Matt Doherty is destined for a sophomore slump in his second year as North Carolina's head coach. Maybe it's that Ronald Curry might not be back until January, and Julius Peppers might not be back ever.

Or maybe it's just that these Tar Heels aren't all that good.

Whatever the reason, it figures to be a wild and potentially disappointing season at the Smith Center for Doherty's Tar Heels, who have to cope with the early departure of Joseph Forte and the possibility that the steadying force of

Curry and the physical play of Peppers won't be there to spark the Tar Heels the way they did last season.

"I'm sure there's a point guard question in there; I'm sure there's a Julius Peppers and Ronald Curry question in there," said Doherty for his opening statement at ACC's Operation Basketball last month. "I'm sure there's a go-to question in there."

Doherty and his team know questions surround them and will do their best to start answering them Nov. 16 against Hampton at the Smith Center.

Question 1: Who's the man?
Forte averaged 20.9 points per game last year - 23.7 ppg against ACC opponents - while Haywood chipped in 12.3 ppg and was key in the Tar Heels' defensive efforts.

With those guys trying to make their way in the NBA, the Tar Heels have to find someone to pick up the scoring slack.

Or someone.
"I think we have some guys who can work the system," said sophomore point guard Adam Boone. "I think we have a lot of people that can score on this team. I think almost everybody that we possibly put on the floor can be a threat for us. Sometimes that not knowing is a

strength in terms of that you've got to have people step up. But I think definitely the seniors will be scoring - they're going to be the leaders on and off the court."

The seniors in question, Jason Capel and Kris Lang, both now have to shoulder their respective burdens that formerly Forte and Haywood held.

Now Capel is expected to step up and score many of the points Forte did.

"I'm just in a bigger role now as far as scoring," Capel said. "We had the pleasure of having Joe, somebody you know that can get 20 or 30 any night, and the presence of Brendan inside. We don't have that this year, but I'm capable, and we have guys on this team that are very capable of doing that also."

In the post, Lang will now be drawing the double teams that harassed Haywood last year. In the offseason, Lang lost weight and worked on his free throws and 18-foot jumper to supplement his left- and right-handed hook.

Question 2: Who's playing the point?
Just like during Doherty's maiden season at the helm, the identity of UNC's point guard is still unknown. Sophomore Adam Boone has a leg up on his competition of Jonathan Holmes and Melvin Scott.

If Curry comes back, he's welcome, but Doherty and the Tar Heels aren't counting on the quarterback to be their floor general this year.

Although Curry didn't spark offensively for North Carolina last season once he joined the team, he provided a calming influence that UNC needed. Curry's first game back on the court started an 18-game winning streak.

Boone has spent time with UNC's new strength coach Thomas McKinney and has bulked up in the hopes that he won't get knocked around on the court as much as last year.

Scott, a freshman from Baltimore, has shown a willingness to take shots, although he hasn't had all that much success in the Tar Heels' first exhibitions.

And Brian Morrison, who split time at the point with Boone before Curry return, will see more time at two, taking advantage of his speed.

Question 3: Are the freshmen good?
They'd better be.

When Forte led the Tar Heels in scoring his freshman year, it was the first time in the program's history that a freshman had accomplished

"The freshmen are going to contribute a lot. Do they have to? Yeah. Are they going to? Absolutely."

JASON CAPEL
UNC Senior Forward

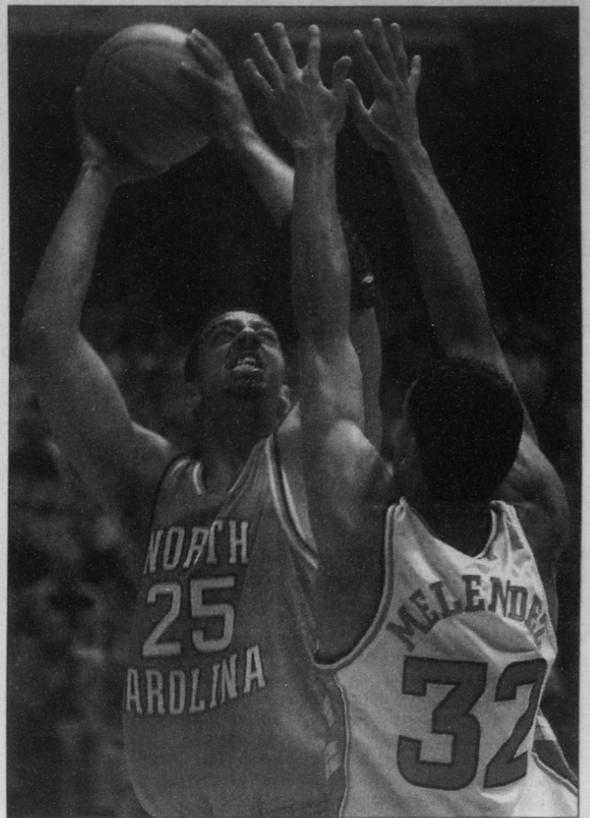
that feat.
While it's doubtful that Scott, Jackie Manuel or Jawad Williams will make a Forte-esque impact on the Tar Heels, they'll have to produce for the team to be successful.

"The freshmen are going to contribute a lot," Capel said. "Do they have to? Yeah. Are they going to? Absolutely."

Capel knows something about the position the freshmen are in this year. When he and Lang were freshmen, they joined a Tar Heel team that had just lost Vince Carter and Antawn Jamison to the NBA and immediately jumped into starting roles.

Capel and Lang know where the Tar Heels are and what they have to do to be successful. And they know how to handle the naysayers.

"I treat that as fuel, of course, and motivation, but also it's disrespect to me



North Carolina guard Jason Capel shoots over Orlando Melendez in the Blue-White Game. Capel was UNC's third leading scorer last year.

as a player and to our program," Lang said. "We're representing the players of the past. So that's just something to take personal. Whenever we're tired, when

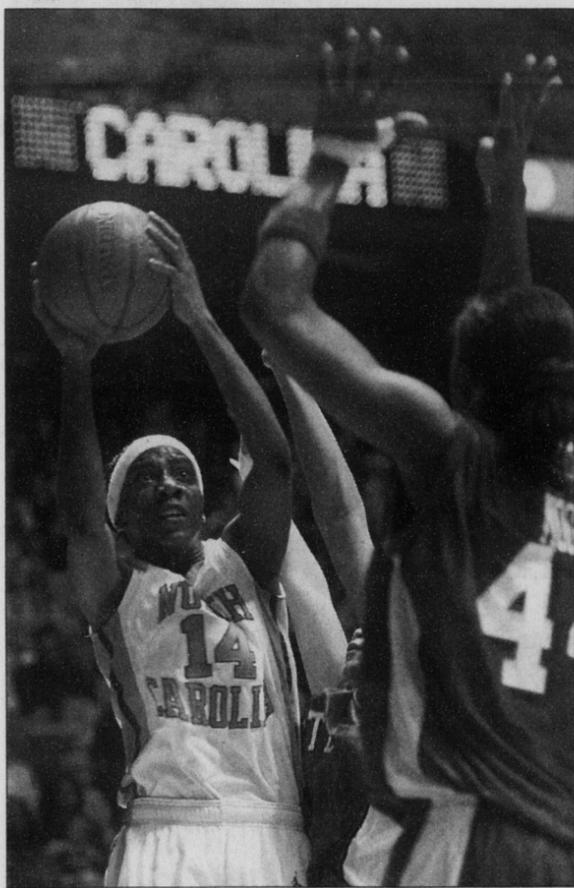
we're sore during practice, we think about that, and that just really upsets you even more, and you get another adrenaline rush, and you go out hard."

UNC Men's Basketball 2001-02

- **Key Returnees:** G Adam Boone (1.5 ppg, 1.4 apg); F Jason Capel (11.4 ppg, 7.3 rpg); F/C Kris Lang (11.3 ppg, 5.7 rpg)
- **Key Newcomers:** C Neil Fingleton, G Jackie Manuel, G Melvin Scott, F Jawad Williams
- **Key Losses:** G Joseph Forte, C Brendan Haywood, F/G Max Owens
- **2000-01 Record:** 26-7, 13-3 in the ACC
- **Final Result:** Lost in NCAA 2nd Round to Penn State

Head Coach
Matt Doherty

Trio of Talented Guards Key To Women's Success



Junior guard Coretta Brown scored 15.9 points per game last season as the Tar Heels' point guard while chipping in 193 assists.

By JAMES GIZA
Sportsaturday Editor

Nikki, Nikki, Nikki. All the hype surrounding the return of guard Nikki Teasley to the North Carolina women's basketball team has overshadowed the arrival of a newcomer who could add a dynamic dimension to the team.

As if the tandem of Teasley and Coretta Brown, a junior who thrived at the point guard spot last season, did not promise to be formidable enough, freshman Leah Metcalf had to come along and change the Tar Heels' entire outlook - for what promises to be the better.

Looking for UNC's point guard on the floor this season? Good luck.

Wait, there she is. It's Teasley, crossing up her defender and faking a pass inside that gives her opponent whiplash.

No, it's Brown. See, that's her penetrating into the lane and kicking the ball out to a wide-open teammate on the perimeter.

No, no, that's not her either. It's definitely Metcalf, the high school track star.

Only the point guard would have a first step that fast.

To avoid any further confusion, here's the final answer: The point guard is all of them. And none of them. Still puzzled? Don't be.

UNC coach Sylvia Hatchell has a plan this season, one that should make the Tar Heels more explosive and dangerous on both sides of the ball.

The 6-foot Teasley, 5-8 Brown and 5-7 Metcalf all are capable of taking their defender off the dribble, shooting and making the pass.

All have tremendous foot speed,

which gives UNC the ability to press and trap on defense.

So, Hatchell has decided, why not have her cake and eat it, too? Heck, maybe even have thirds?

"I don't think we're going to have a point guard this year on our team," Hatchell said.

"We're going to have three guards. When they're out there on the court together, which could be a lot - Leah, Coretta and Nikki - I think whichever one's got the ball is going to be difficult for other teams because the other two will fill the other spots."

The trio could be just what UNC needs to send it back to the NCAA Tournament.

North Carolina finished 15-14 overall and 7-9 in the ACC last season, missing out on an NCAA bid for the first time since 1996.

Gone are starters LaQuanda Barksdale, an All-American forward who averaged 19 points and 11.5 rebounds per game, shooting guard Juana Brown, who contributed 13.8 points per game, and guard Leah Sharp.

Gone, too, are guards Cherie Lea and Joy Hairston, who transferred in the off-season, and center LaShonda Allen, who remains on scholarship but will not

"I have played Nikki and Coretta together, one and two, and it was pretty devastating."

SYLVIA HATCHELL
UNC Women's Basketball Coach



UNC guard Nikki Teasley averaged 14.6 points and 4.0 rebounds in 26 games in the 1999-2000 season.

play because of injury problems.
But the Tar Heels developed several players last season, a couple of whom will be pushed into more prominent roles this year.

Given the daunting task of replacing Teasley, Brown responded with 15.9 points and 6.7 assists per game.

Six-foot-6 center Candace Sutton, meanwhile, struggled with foul trouble at times but still blocked 1.4 shots per game (second in the ACC) and averaged 9.8 points, earning All-ACC freshman team honors.

This summer, she passed up the USA Women's Basketball Junior team to stay in Chapel Hill and increase her strength.

"I know one of the things that I've done over the summer is I've gotten a lot stronger," Sutton said. "I think that'll really help out in a lot of aspects of the game - rebounding, being able to post up a lot stronger."

Also in the mix are freshman Nikita Bell and sophomore Chrystal Baptist, who should start at small and power forward, respectively, and will probably share time in the Tar Heels' three-guard set.

The return of seven players, plus

Teasley, and a strong freshman class has given the Tar Heels substantial depth, which should allow them to press on defense and substitute freely, things they couldn't do last season.

The interesting part, however, will be the development of the three-guard combination.

The three have yet to play on the same team in practice - Hatchell says it's because the other wouldn't have a point guard - but Brown and Teasley have been paired together with promising results.

"I have played Nikki and Coretta together, one and two, and it was pretty devastating," Hatchell said.

Brown concurred that the on-court chemistry between her and Teasley has been good so far.

"She's a great shooter; she's a great driver," Brown said. "I love to penetrate. So I think that helps us out."

Metcalf shouldn't hurt either.
"It's going to be hard to keep Leah and Coretta and Nikki off the court," Hatchell said. "Those three can play point guard, they can play wing, they can penetrate, they can shoot. Those three are a tremendous combination of guards."

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