

Healthy Chambers Ready to Play Sutton Continues Steady Improvements in Middle

Courtney Chambers' first two years at UNC have been marred by a variety of illnesses and injuries.

By BEN DESANTIS
Staff Writer

Courtney Chambers wears the No. 20 as a tribute to her father, William, who wore the same number nearly 30 years ago when he ran up and down the floor of Carmichael Auditorium.

A self-proclaimed "daddy's girl," Chambers said choosing North Carolina and becoming a part of the Tar Heel family was an easy decision for her to make.

"He had a ball in my hands since I started walking," she said. "I've played my whole life and wanted to come down here and become a part of the tra-

dition." But now, following in her father's footsteps is the least of Chambers' worries.

After being forced to redshirt her freshman year because of mononucleosis and after suffering through several different illnesses and injuries last season, the sophomore from Asheville said she hopes to stay healthy enough to play the entire year.

"Last year, it was so frustrating to see games come down to the wire," Chambers said. "It wears on you mentally, only being asked to cheer. My entire attitude is that's not going to hap-



Sophomore guard Courtney Chambers had to redshirt her first year because of mononucleosis.

pen this year." After spending her summer regaining her health and working herself back into playing shape, Chambers said she is 100-percent healthy and ready to prove she belongs.

"I love playing basketball here; I love playing in Carmichael," she said. "To me, the main motivating factor was that I hate quitting."

Although her career statistics (1.7 points per game and one rebound per game through 30 games) have yet to impress, Chambers said she is looking forward to getting back on the court and helping the team achieve its goals of winning the ACC and earning a berth in the NCAA Tournament.

"I want to be able to encourage," she said. "However, I want to be on the floor, making an impact."

Chambers' attitude stems from her desire to repay her coaches and teammates for the support they have shown her during the past two years.

"My teammates have been really supportive," she said. "They were always checking in, always concerned. When I was in the hospital for a day or two last year, the coaches came by and several team members dropped in to let me know they were thinking about me."

But Chambers' greatest supporter is still her father, who she said e-mails her inspirational messages daily to keep her motivated.

"Life's like riding a bike - you just have to keep on pedaling," she recalled from one of the messages. "The hard times when you're challenged make you stronger. You always get better."

Sutton continues steady improvements in middle.

Sophomore Candace Sutton attend a post player camp this summer that heavily concentrated on footwork.

By WILL SMALL
Staff Writer

Like many of her fellow college students, Candace Sutton worked over the summer.

But not many of Sutton's fellow students worked to become one of the elite centers in the ACC.

The North Carolina center spent the summer lifting weights and attending and teaching at basketball camps to improve her skills.

She worked as a counselor at a Michael Jordan camp, and she attended a Pete Newell's Premier Post Player Camp at the University of California-Monterey Bay. She is already beginning to see the fruits of her labor.

"I've noticed a big difference (in my play)," Sutton said.

Newell's camp stressed skills such as footwork and low-post moves.

But it was her work at another camp that stands out in Sutton's mind.

As a camp counselor at Michael Jordan's basketball camp in Chapel Hill this summer, Sutton and sophomore teammate Carrie Davis got to meet

Jordan briefly.

"I had a lot of fun, and you get to meet a lot of new people from other colleges that were also counselors," Sutton said. "Of course we got to meet Michael, and that was a lot of fun. It was amazing."

Although many of the counselors worked up the courage to ask if Jordan was returning to the NBA, they never received an answer.

UNC coach Sylvia Hatchell said she thinks Sutton made the right decision by forgoing a chance to play on a national team to instead spend her summer working on aspects of her game.

"Candace knew what she had to do to get better, and she gave up USA basketball to do it," Hatchell said. "She's going to be much stronger, and confidence-wise, she's going to be hard to stop inside."

Her experiences during the summer might indeed help Sutton achieve her goal of becoming a premier ACC center.

The 6-foot-6 sophomore was one of



Sophomore center Candace Sutton averaged 9.8 points and 5.6 rebounds for the Tar Heels in 2000-01.

the league's young stars last season, but she still missed her goal of being named ACC Rookie of the Year.

Instead, Sutton was a member of the conference's All-Freshman Team, averaging 9.8 points and 5.6 rebounds per game.

As one of only two returning starters from last year's team, Sutton is already going to be called on to be a leader on the floor for the Tar Heels, although she is only in her second year at UNC.

"I'm a leader on this team," Sutton said. "I know (the coaches) are looking for me to have a specific role, and they're looking for me to carry out that role."

However, Sutton isn't worried that the team's success will be totally dependent on her.

"I think the people backing me up are great players," Sutton said. "I think we won't be missing anything if I leave the game."

Although she doesn't feel that pressure, she is still confident that her play can be stellar this season. One of her goals this season is to make first team All-ACC.

It remains to be seen if her other goals, winning an ACC championship and making it to the Final Four, can be accomplished.

If she achieves those lofty goals, then Sutton will truly know if her summer of hard work was worth it.

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Davis Aims To Impact UNC Squad

Sophomore center Carrie Davis said she doesn't mind being a practice player, as long as she is helping.

BY AARON FITT
Staff Writer

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North Carolina backup center Carrie Davis never wanted to play basketball in the first place.

Now all she wants is a chance to be on the court.

The 6-foot-4 sophomore started playing basketball at her parents' urging when she was in fifth grade. The game took some time to grow on her, but she excelled during high school, earning all-region and all-district honors each of her four seasons at Brentwood High in Tennessee.

"At first I was like, 'I don't want to play basketball,'" she said. "As soon as I started playing AAU, basketball was all I ever wanted to do."

When she was in sixth grade, Davis decided that she wanted to play for the Tar Heels. She says it was UNC's 1993 men's national championship team that inspired her to make this decision.

But now that she's here in Chapel Hill, Davis has to deal with the struggle for playing time that accompanies top athletic programs.

Davis averaged 14 points, eight rebounds and 3.5 blocks as a high school senior. She plays big and has the potential to make a significant contribution on the UNC interior.

That is, if she can get some playing time.

Davis appeared in only eight games last season, scoring one point and grabbing six rebounds. Her primary contribution came during practice, when she competed with sophomore center Candace Sutton.

"I want to get to play, and I want to make my teammates better," she said. "I want to help Candace get as far as she can. I really want to help my teammates. If I have to do that by being a practice player, then I'll do it, but I really want to play."

Davis knows she has to work very hard to achieve this goal. She said she focused on improving her conditioning during the offseason.

"I ran. I ran a lot. And I lifted weights when I got home," Davis said.

But her hard work might not necessarily result in more playing time. UNC coach Sylvia Hatchell said 6-3 freshman Jenni Laaksonen is the second best post player on the team behind Sutton. So Davis might still be third on the depth chart.

As much as Davis wants time on the court, she realizes there is life after UNC hoops.

"I would really love to play ball overseas, to see the world," Davis said. "I would like to do that for a few years and then just be normal. I want to get married and have kids. And I would like to have a normal job, live a normal life and not play basketball."