

DTH FILE PHOTO

In his second season with the Tar Heels, UNC coach Matt Doherty (above) had to endure many tough moments. The Tar Heels finished 8-20, their worst record in school history. Below, UNC players huddle up after senior forward Jason Capel (center) fouled out against Duke in his final ACC Tournament game.

Stepping

Taking a Look Back at UNC's Memorable, Forgettable Year

DEAN SMITH WAS FIDGETY AND UNCOMFORTABLE ON JULY 11, 2000. HE STOOD IN A CORNER AS MATT DOHERTY WAS NAMED NORTH CAROLINA'S NEXT MEN'S BASKETBALL COACH AND DOHERTY ANSWERED QUESTIONS.

When reporters surrounded Smith, who had sat by Bill Guthridge's side 11 days earlier when Guthridge announced his retirement, he expressed that he didn't want to be there and looked for excuses to leave the circus.

"It's a new beginning for Carolina basketball," Smith said of the program he and Guthridge had spent the previous 39 years building.

"There's a celebration, and there's a funeral." Smith was speaking of the young replacing the old and the departure of three ex-player assistant coaches. He likely had no idea how prophetic his words would prove to be.

That Tuesday, Doherty set for himself and UNC five annual goals. The first two, to get better every day and to win the next game, were basic coach-speak. The others — to win the ACC regular season and tournament championships and the national title — seemed a little change of pace from Smith, who won but rarely stressed the need to do so publicly.

"If I start changing those goals, it's time to look for a new coach," Doherty said that day.

The Tar Heels kicked off practice that fall with "Midnight with Matt." In contrast, Smith considered retiring earlier than he did to avoid the personal attention that would come with breaking Adolph Rupp's wins record.

Then UNC won 18 straight games, achieved a No. 1 ranking, tied for the regular-season crown, and Doherty was named the national coach of the year. Back to normal in Chapel Hill, despite losing half of the last 10 games, including a second-round exit from the NCAA tournament.

Sophomore All-American Joseph Forte left for the NBA, and suddenly people started wondering what would become of UNC basketball. The answer didn't take long.

Without Jason Capel, the Tar Heels lost an exhibition by 31 points.

"Obviously, that kind of alerted the fans that this may not be a typical season for North Carolina," Doherty said last week in his Smith Center office before going to Atlanta to see his former boss, Roy Williams, coach in the Final Four. "And to lose to Hampton and Davidson kind of confirmed that. I always felt we were going to get better and improve and be in position to win ballgames, and we never got to that point on a consistent basis."

The 8-20 season included a last-place tie in the conference at 4-12, the most losses ever, the most home losses ever, the most ACC losses ever, the two worst Smith Center losses, a six-game losing streak and the most points given up in a single game. It also marked the end of the streaks of top-three conference finishes, 20-win seasons and NCAA tournament appearances. The Tar Heels weren't even close to qualifying for the consolation NIT, which requires a .500 record.

The season's low points each had different meaning to dif-

ferent members of the team.

"That was the worst thing I've ever experienced," Jawad Williams said of the Hampton and Davidson losses. "We kept getting a win here or a win there, but we just couldn't put it together."

Doherty mentioned the psychological damage Hampton's unexpected zone had on the team — three months later and unsolicited. However, he said the games that kept him up at night were Wake Forest at home, at Maryland, at Connecticut and at Wake Forest, which the Tar Heels lost by a combined 111 points.

"Those four games were the games where I was the most frustrated, most discouraged, most depressed," Doherty said. "I felt in those four games we didn't play up to our abilities and we didn't fight. Those were depressing moments during the season."

Many players became short of words and long on frustration. After the 29-point home loss to Duke, the worst in Smith Center history, Capel's exchange with a horde of reporters on deadline at his locker went like this:

Q: What happened when things got out of hand in the second half?

A: You all watched the game. They made shots. We turned the ball over.

Q: Are they the best team you've played this year?

A: Yup.

Q: What did they do out there that gave you guys trouble tonight?

A: Everything.

Q: What did Coach Doherty tell you after the game?

A: Get ready for Georgia Tech.

Q: How does this team put this behind it and go on?

A: It's just something you've got to do.

Poor defense contributed to many of the ugly losses. Next year, with an even younger squad, Doherty intends to concentrate three-fourths of practice on defense and run more motion offense as he did later this season. He had similar plans in mind last off-season before something, well, changed.

"I went into the season thinking that we'd run more freelance and not have as many set plays," Doherty said. "Then just before practice started, my mind frame changed a little bit toward that. I wish I would have stuck with my original plan because I think that would've helped our team." He said he didn't "care to share" what changed his mind.

"Regrets, to me you make the best decisions you can at the time with the information you have. Hindsight's always 20/20. If it works, it's great. If it doesn't work, you say, 'I wish I would have tried it differently.'"

There were moments of celebration, but they came in odd forms.

Picking up Win One in Game Four against Georgia Tech and being 1-0 in the ACC for the next month. A last-minute win against Binghamton. A three-game winning streak against St. Joseph's, N.C. A&T and Texas A&M in December to pull to a .500 record for the only time. Playing a tight, slow-down game with Duke in the ACC Tournament. The biggest of all was winning on Senior Day and denying Clemson's bid for its first win in Chapel Hill. Doherty and the players danced and sang with the student body and band before they left the court for the final time in a season when many of the things that have come to mean North Carolina basketball ended.

"I realized with all the streaks that we broke this year, that was the one that people would have made maybe the most of," Doherty admitted the next week.

Throughout the 2001-02 soap opera, Doherty repeatedly thanked the crowds for their fan support during a most difficult time. The only capacity showings were against Duke and

N.C. State, when the crowd was much louder than the Tar Heels.

It was a strange four years for Capel, who spent four years for Capel at school with Rohan and Americans.

"It's everything I've ever experienced," Doherty's team. Capel said as he turned around on his season. Doherty's Sp more guard Brian M transfer. Now three will be here in the Jonathan Holmes at

"Players transfer and they're on the wall — not in the past — not in the past. I think for whatever reason, in some cases, it's a good thing."

Arguably, the biggest loss was the departure of these players from the team as a result of losing that "North Carolina" jersey.

"It's hard, but life goes on," Johnson said at times. "Johnson's Winston-Salem. It's something where you go to be tough and going."

Where the Tar Heels from here as they age their top and talented players is what will ponder until the end of answers comes next.

"I think the future great for this program they've learned so much said after already some final collegio game character with what's that's one great thing Capel, who prob-

than any of his team that game against Duke with emotional good when he's gone, thing again.

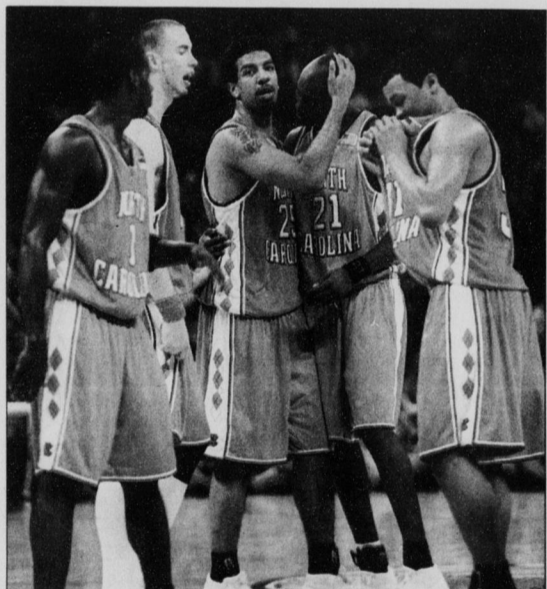
"I know he's hurt, but he came to us and hugged us and told us, 'Doherty, again,'" freshman M told him that we love emotional part in the told us to keep playing said that we almost

"Those were his last moments. He went to the bench."

The Sports Editor


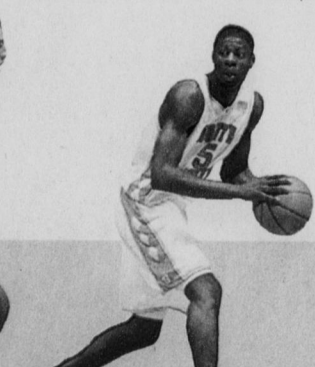




A Season's Lows

- North Carolina lost more games (20) than any team in school history. The previous record was 15, set in the 1950-51 and 1951-52 seasons.
- At Maryland on Jan. 9, the Tar Heels allowed the most points in school history in a 112-79 loss. UNC had twice allowed 110 points, once in a win and once in a loss in the program's history.
- UNC totaled the most ACC losses in school history, dropping 12 games to break the 1963-64 mark of eight. Only twice in school history had the Tar Heels finished with a sub-.500 record in ACC play: in 1953-54 and 1963-64.
- The Tar Heels twice lost five home games in a row in 2001-02. The previous worst mark was four straight home losses, which happened twice.
- UNC finished with the most home losses (nine) in school history, topping the previous mark of 5, set twice.



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Returning Players

 <p>Will Johnson Senior Forward</p> <p>Strengths: Boxes out and rebounds well. Can knock down open shots. Experienced.</p> <p>Weaknesses: Doesn't create own offense. Not quick enough to guard most wingmen, not big enough to guard most interior players.</p> <p>Outlook: Could see significant minutes early as young Tar Heels continue to mature, especially inside.</p>	 <p>Jackie Manuel Sophomore Swingman</p> <p>Strengths: Defensive intensity helped keep him in the lineup this year, as his long arms and quick feet helped him pester opposing guards.</p> <p>Weaknesses: Shooting and decision-making were suspect throughout the season. Has to stay in control with dribble.</p> <p>Outlook: Could be brought in as a defensive stopper until develops better offensive fundamentals.</p>	 <p>Adam Boone Junior Point Guard</p> <p>Strengths: Has good court awareness and can run the offense efficiently. Has strong upper body and is a solid 3-pt. shooter (43 percent in 2001-02). Experienced.</p> <p>Weaknesses: Has had trouble identifying and reacting to pressure defenses. Still struggles to beat defenders one-on-one off the dribble.</p> <p>Outlook: Could begin season as starter while freshman point guard Raymond Felton learns the ropes. Later will likely come off the bench to spell Felton and for his perimeter shooting.</p>	 <p>Melvin Scott Sophomore Shooting Guard</p> <p>Strengths: Has nice shooting touch and plays good on-the-ball defense. Solid offensive contributor.</p> <p>Weaknesses: Decision-making, especially when distributing the basketball, is an issue. Needs to keep improving his handle.</p> <p>Outlook: Should see plenty of minutes at the 2-guard — his natural position — next season, especially since Brian Morrison transferred.</p>	 <p>Jonathan Holmes Senior Point Guard</p> <p>Strengths: Fundamentally sound. Does what is asked of him and runs offense well.</p> <p>Weaknesses: At 6-foot, 181-pounds, just doesn't match up physically with guards of the ACC.</p> <p>Outlook: Will earn his keep on the practice court and with senior leadership. His minutes will be limited once again.</p>	 <p>Jawad Williams Sophomore Forward</p> <p>Strengths: Developed pump fake in lane to get by bigger, slower defenders. Is fairly quick and is improving as a shooter.</p> <p>Weaknesses: Needs to hone his offensive arsenal, including the turnaround jumper. Most importantly, needs to bulk up in the off-season to be able to hold off defenders and rebound better.</p> <p>Outlook: Could be one of the go-to guys in 2002-03. The most talented of the sophomore class.</p>
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