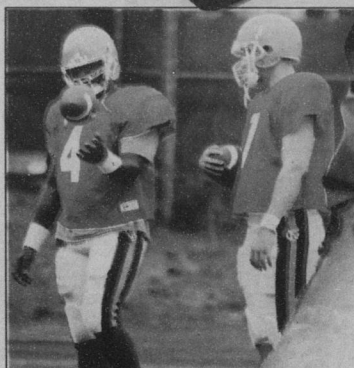


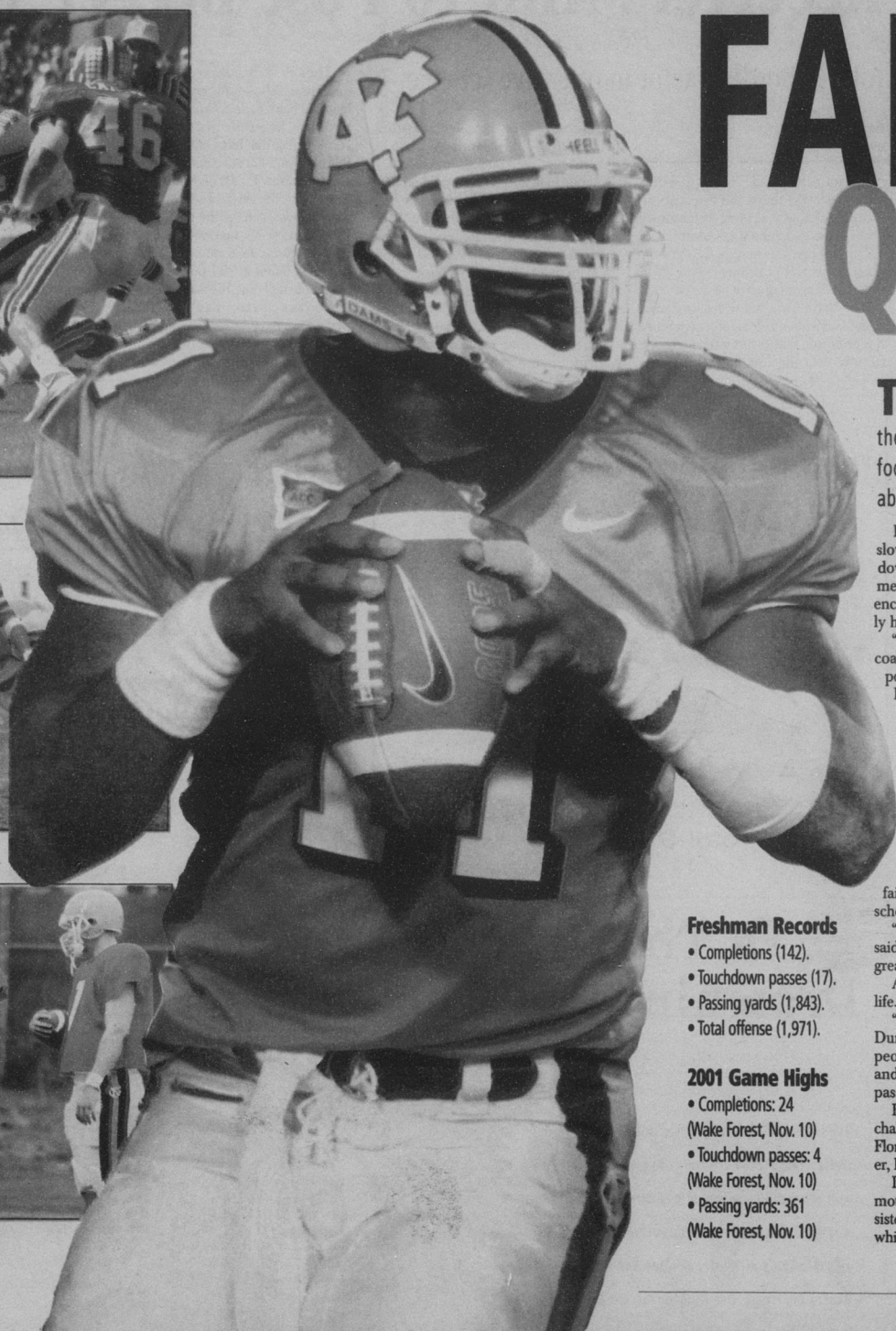
DTH/JOSHUA GREER



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DTH/BRIAN CASSELLA



# FAMILY QB BACK

They could just have shaken hands and gone their separate ways, but it wasn't just about football or transferring, and it certainly wasn't about hurt feelings or broken commitments.

It couldn't have been, not after the words had come so slowly, so haltingly for Darian Durant when he had stared down at the sheet in front of him just minutes before. Media members had crowded in front of him in the press conference room of the Kenan Football Center, but his eyes hardly had lifted off the prepared page from which he had read. "This was not a spontaneous decision," he had said as his coach sat beside him at the Feb. 25 press conference. "I've pondered over this a long time, thought hard about it, and I feel like it's the best thing for me to do."

After asking that the media respect his privacy, Durant stood up and turned to North Carolina coach John Bunting, who wrapped him in a quick embrace. As the two broke away, Bunting gave Durant a reassuring look before his quarterback left, seemingly walking out of the program for good. Just as quickly as the 5-foot-11, 226-pounder had flashed onto the scene as a redshirt freshman, he was gone, ready to transfer to another school.

But a day before the Tar Heels' 2002 season begins, Durant is again in the spotlight after showing renewed faith in the program that stood by him since he was in high school.

"I think Darian Durant is a very special person," Bunting said. "He's got some unique thought processes. He's shown a great deal of resolve in the way he's prepared for the season."

And if you believe Durant, he's brought a new attitude to life. If you believe people close to him, he's ready to flourish.

"I have never seen him at peace until now," said Israel Durant, Darian's father. "I don't know why. Maybe some people want to be wanted, respected— everybody does— and compete and do well. It's a test, and he's gone and passed it."

Back when he was a youngster, there didn't seem to be any challenge too difficult for Durant on the fields and courts of Florence, S.C. He grew up an athlete, just like his oldest brother, Keshawn, who played quarterback at South Carolina State.

Durant's father remained close, though he and Darian's mother, Betty Durant, were divorced. When Israel Durant's sister died in the early 1990s, he moved into her house— which just happened to be across the street from the house in

### Freshman Records

- Completions (142).
- Touchdown passes (17).
- Passing yards (1,843).
- Total offense (1,971).

### 2001 Game Highs

- Completions: 24 (Wake Forest, Nov. 10)
- Touchdown passes: 4 (Wake Forest, Nov. 10)
- Passing yards: 361 (Wake Forest, Nov. 10)

## STORIES BY

### THE JOURNEY HERE AND BACK

**FALL 1999:** Four games into Wilson High's season, Durant breaks a bone in his left leg. He misses eight games, and several teams recruiting him are scared off. Durant ends up passing for a school-record 2,446 yards and scoring 25 touchdowns.

**FALL 2000:** Durant enrolls at North Carolina and eventually is red-shirted. He is relegated to scout team duties and grows to feel neglected by former offensive coordinator Mike O'Cain, who was one of his main recruiters.

**AUGUST 2001:** Durant takes the backup job from Aaron Leak, and he later sees time in the Tar Heels' first game of the season, a 41-27 loss at Oklahoma. Durant finishes 12 of 26 for 152 yards and two touchdowns, proving that he is capable of leading the team against stiff competition.



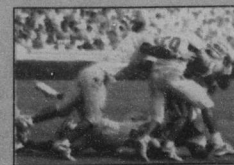
DTH/KARA ARNDT

**EARLY SEPTEMBER 2001:** Quarterback controversy begins as four-year starter and senior

Ronald Curry (left) continues to struggle in losses to Texas and Maryland.

**SEPTEMBER 22, 2001:** The Tar Heels trounce favored, and sixth-ranked, Florida State, 41-9. Durant and Curry both shine in the game, and soon afterward UNC wins five straight games

with both QBs splitting playing time.



DTH/KARA ARNDT

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