

# UNC's Sutton takes center stage

Senior to play pivotal role in post

BY WILL ROBINSON  
STAFF WRITER

Candace Sutton is no longer under the radar as a starting center in the ACC.

After two straight postseasons in which she has been voted to the All-ACC Tournament first team, Sutton has established herself as one of the league's premier post players.

This season, her fourth as a starter for North Carolina, she is poised to continue to secure her place in the Tar Heel record books and lead an experienced group of centers to success.

"Candace has had a big summer, and this is her last year," said North Carolina coach Sylvia Hatchell. "She's one of our captains, and we're expecting big things from Candace."

"She's played very well in the ACC Tournament the last few years, and we're looking for her to do that for the whole season, not just those three days of the ACC tournament, and I really believe that she'll do that."

Sutton, who has swatted 150 shots in her career, is the most prolific shot blocker to play at North Carolina since Dawn Royster, who played from 1984-87. While Sutton won't surpass Royster's school record of 329 rejections, she will

continue to make life in the post difficult for opposing players.

"Whoever comes (in the lane), it doesn't matter," Sutton said. "I know my shot-blocking ability."

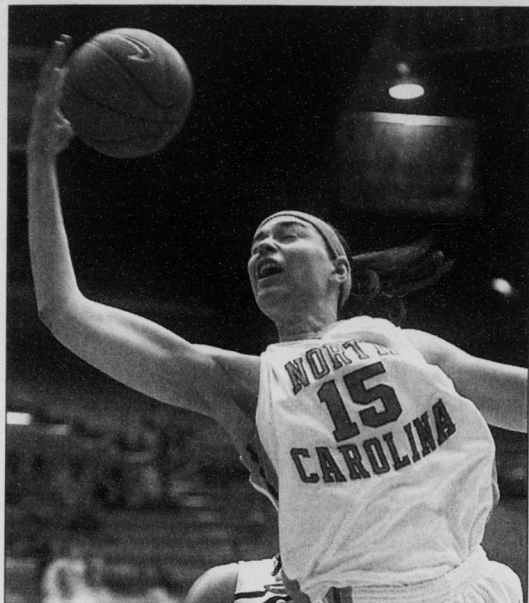
As the team's second-leading returning scorer (10.8 points per game) and rebounder (5.7 per game), Sutton also will be counted on for leadership at both ends of the court.

"I think this year's going to be a good year for me," Sutton said. "I've improved a lot, but with the team we have, we complement each other. If I don't have opportunities or I'm double-teamed, I'll just kick it back out and I know our outside shooters can score."

Backing up Sutton is 6-foot-4 senior Carrie Davis, an experienced player who shot 53.7 percent from the field last season. Davis also is prepared to provide leadership with Sutton.

"I just see us as being a big presence and scoring," Davis said. "I see us as being big leaders, because that's just the nature of Candace and me."

Red-shirt sophomore Tiffany Tucker also will provide depth at the center slot. An imposing figure at 6-foot-5 and an admirer of Shaquille O'Neal, Tucker is ready to see the court after ACL injuries sidelined her for most of the past two seasons.



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Senior center Candace Sutton, who averaged 10.8 points per game last year, also will be a force on the boards for the Tar Heels this season.

Before the injury her freshman year, Tucker averaged 1.5 points and 1.3 rebounds per game in limited playing time. Her best career game came against Western Carolina on Nov. 20, 2001, when she scored four points and grabbed six rebounds.

Like most of their teammates, the Tar Heel centers have set high goals for this year's team, but Davis agrees that one in particular cannot be ignored — beating Duke.

"(Beating Duke) is pretty darn important because we haven't done it yet," Davis said. "I guess we're just tired of them being on top."

Along with Davis, Sutton believes this year's team could be a

more cohesive unit than in years past, especially after spending the summer with her teammates.

"I didn't go to the 'big camp' — I stayed here with everybody else," Sutton said. "We played pickup every day. We lifted weights together, ran. Everybody just worked on their game every day."

One thing is certain for the two senior centers: they are settling for nothing less than first place in the conference in their final season.

"We don't base our whole season around beating Duke," Sutton said. "Our goal is just to come out and be number one, and if that means beating Duke that's just what we have to do."

# Latta, Little look to see time early

Freshmen could both start for UNC

BY TYLER DANCY  
STAFF WRITER

As the North Carolina women's basketball team begins its season, high expectations have been set squarely on the shoulders of the two freshmen on the team, Ivory Latta and Camille Little.

Don't look for either to disappoint.

Both Latta and Little join the Tar Heels with impressive high school credentials, as both were McDonald's High School All-Americans.

Latta, a 5-foot-6 point guard from South Carolina, was the 2003 national women's high school player of the year, and is the all-time leading scorer in South Carolina history — men's or women's. Her 4,319 points shattered the former record by almost 1,000 points.

As if the expectations weren't already high enough, Latta has been voted as the ACC Preseason Rookie of the Year.

UNC coach Sylvia Hatchell is confident Latta will excel and has nothing but great things to say about her point guard.

"She's the whole package, a small package but an explosive one," Hatchell said. "The kid has heart like you cannot imagine. She's just incredible."

"I think we're better than last year, because Ivory's a true point guard and she's just going to wreak havoc in transition."

The whole team is aware of Latta's speed and ability to drive to the basket.

"She's quick as lightning — when you blink, she's gone," said La'Tangela Atkinson, last season's ACC Rookie of the Year. "We're going to have to pick up our pace to stick with her, and I think that's going to help us out in the long run."

Junior Nikita Bell, who was named to the conference All-Defensive team, has had a tough time guarding Latta in practice in

the preseason.

"If (Latta) makes up her mind that she's going to get to the basket, that's what she's going to do," Bell said. "And for her size, I'm impressed how she's able to do that."

Senior team captain Candace Sutton also spoke of how the freshman point guard motivates her teammates.

"(Latta) has tremendous leadership ability," Sutton said. "It's just the emotion and the passion that she plays with, and she helps her teammates feed off her."

"Just to see her talent, it's a gift from God. I expect to see great things from them both."

And while Latta is expected to secure the point for the Tar Heels, the 6-1 Little will give the team a strong inside presence that will be crucial to the team's success.

"Camille, she's dominated several practices," Sutton said.

Little is no slouch, either, when it comes to accolades. As a senior, she was named the North Carolina Player of the Year by The Associated Press, and was a three-time all-state selection.

"I've just been really impressed with Camille," Hatchell said. "She can make a three, she's very explosive over the basket and this kid is a player on the boards."

"I mean, she loves to get a rebound — you see her get in there and she'll take somebody out trying to get a rebound up around the rim. She's a tremendous athlete. She has the instincts that you just don't teach."

Both girls are eager to begin their Tar Heel careers on Nov. 21 against St. Francis (Penn.).

"I'm very excited about the upcoming season," Latta said. "I think we have a chance to do some special things."

Said Little, "We have a talented team. I think we're going to be even better than we were last year, definitely."

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