

UNC Seniors Climax Careers



Three of the most popular, exciting and colorful basketball stars to ever play at Carolina will bring an end to their college careers this afternoon when the Tar Heels play their final regular season game against Duke University.

Bob Lewis and Tom Gauntlett will each be making their last appearance before a home crowd while Mark Mirken will be benched due to an injury.

This article isn't going to make any attempt to pay tribute to them, but these are their own individual stories as told in their own words about their basketball careers here at Carolina.

"I've played on three varsity teams now," Bob Lewis began, "and each one has

been as different as night and day. I played on the same team with Billy Cunningham my sophomore year and felt

privileged to be able to play with him. Billy was more of an individual player for us, and we all looked to him to carry the team. He was a tremendous rebounder, probably the best in the school's history. We had a 15-9 record that year, and I believe we could have won twenty games

that year if we could have beaten some of the teams we lost to by one or two points. I played forward that year and really had my ups and downs, but the experience I gained

has since proven to be invaluable.

"My junior year was the first year I played with Larry (Miller)," Bob continued. "Larry and I are different types of players in that he's very strong and can score

easier from under the basket than I can. When the season

first started, I felt like I would have to lead the team until Larry gained some varsity experience. So, I started off shooting a lot and was av-

eraging about 35 points a game after ten games. Once Larry started playing real well, the other teams began

to key on us, and we both learned a lot of basketball last year.

"This year's team is the best one I've ever played on in my life," he added. "Our big sophomores are really doing a fine job, and for the first

time in six or seven years, Carolina has height and power off the boards. I feel like I'm really contributing more

to the team this year than I have in the past. I'm not scoring as many points as before, but scoring points doesn't

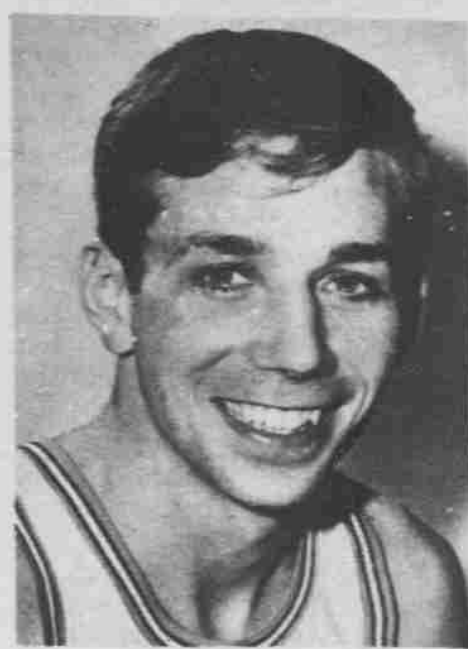
mean a thing if you're not winning ball games. This year we're winning. I think my whole game has improved this year, and I believe now I'm a more complete ball player

than Bob Lewis the scorer was. The whole team has developed that winning feeling, and we're really looking forward to today's game and then the tournament.

"I've had a lot of great moments here at Carolina," Bob said, "but they are all just fond memories that I can look back on. Right now, I'm looking forward to a greater moment yet to come this year with this team, not as an individual."

"It was a lot harder for me to adjust to college basketball than most guys," Tom Gauntlett began. "I had played guard all through high school, and when I got here, I was

playing center on the freshman team because I was the tallest starter. Kenny Rosemond was our coach that year, and we played real hard for him. "My sophomore year wasn't much different," he continued. "I was used as a forward most of the time and



started about half the games that year. We beat Duke twice that season, and I'll never forget those two ball games.

"I think the biggest disappointment for the whole team last year was the 21-20 tournament loss to Duke," Tom said. "I think we all felt that we had that game won and

then let it slip through our hands. Losing that game hurt real bad.

"Being the sixth man this year wasn't an easy adjustment for me to make," he added. "I had started all last year, and when I came back to school this year, I talked

over the prospects for the season with Coach Smith. I knew that we had some real good

sophomores coming up, and with the proper experience and coaching, they could really help make this a great ball club. I also realized that I would be of more value to the team as the sixth man because

after all these guys had two more years to play, and it was only right that they get their chance now."

Ever since Tom has been in school here, he's had the same

roommate, Bob Lewis. "It's really great rooming with Bob," he said. "I first met him in the gym the day I arrived here, and right away I could see that someday he would be a great star. We've always gotten along real well together. I don't believe we've ever had an argument, and even with all the publicity Bob's gotten, we've never had any trouble. Bob's very humble and never wants to talk about himself. I consider myself fortunate to have been able to play on the same team and room with Bob for the past four years. I just hope that we can make our last home game a successful one and then move on to bigger and better things in the next few weeks with this team."

"The first year I played varsity ball was Cunningham's last year," Mark Mirken began. "There wasn't a lot of balance on that team, and we all looked to Billy to lead us.

He was always a great scorer, but I admired him more for his rebounding ability. I played behind Billy that year, and he made us what we were.

"Last year we still didn't have a complete team effort," he continued. "We looked to Larry (Miller) and Bob (Lewis) to carry all the scoring load, and when other teams were able to stop one or both of them, we were in trouble.

I played the sixth man most of last year, and believe that with a few good breaks, we could have won a lot more ball games.

"This year's team is the best of the three I've played

on," Mark continued. "We're getting better all around team effort, and there's more team unity this year. Winning means a lot to all of us, but we want to win not just for ourselves and the school, but for Coach Smith also. He's been a great coach, and I've really enjoyed my years here at Carolina. I'm just sorry that I won't be able to play any more this season."

There have been many tributes paid to these three players over the past four years, but you can pay them an even greater honor this afternoon by showing them how much you've appreciated their efforts on the basketball court here at Carolina.

'Hate To See Them Go...'

By JIM FIELDS
DTH Sports Writer

"I've often been told that I become too attached to my seniors," said Coach Dean Smith when asked how he would feel Saturday when Bob Lewis, Tom Gauntlett and Mark Mirken make their final appearance for Carolina.

"I'll really hate to see them go because I've come to know them so well over the last few years," he continued. "Bob is one of the most complete ball players we've ever had at Carolina. Tom has always played excellent ball for us, even as a sixth man. His desire and hustle has given us a faster team each year. Mark has one of the finest attitudes of any ball player I've ever coached. He's always been used to give our center a rest and has been instrumental in many victories for us."

While these were Coach Smith's feelings about his three seniors, some of the other players on the team expressed similar views.

"It's been a great experience for me to play with all three of them," Larry Miller said. "I admire Bob a great deal. He's the finest ball player I've ever played with, and he deserves every honor he receives.

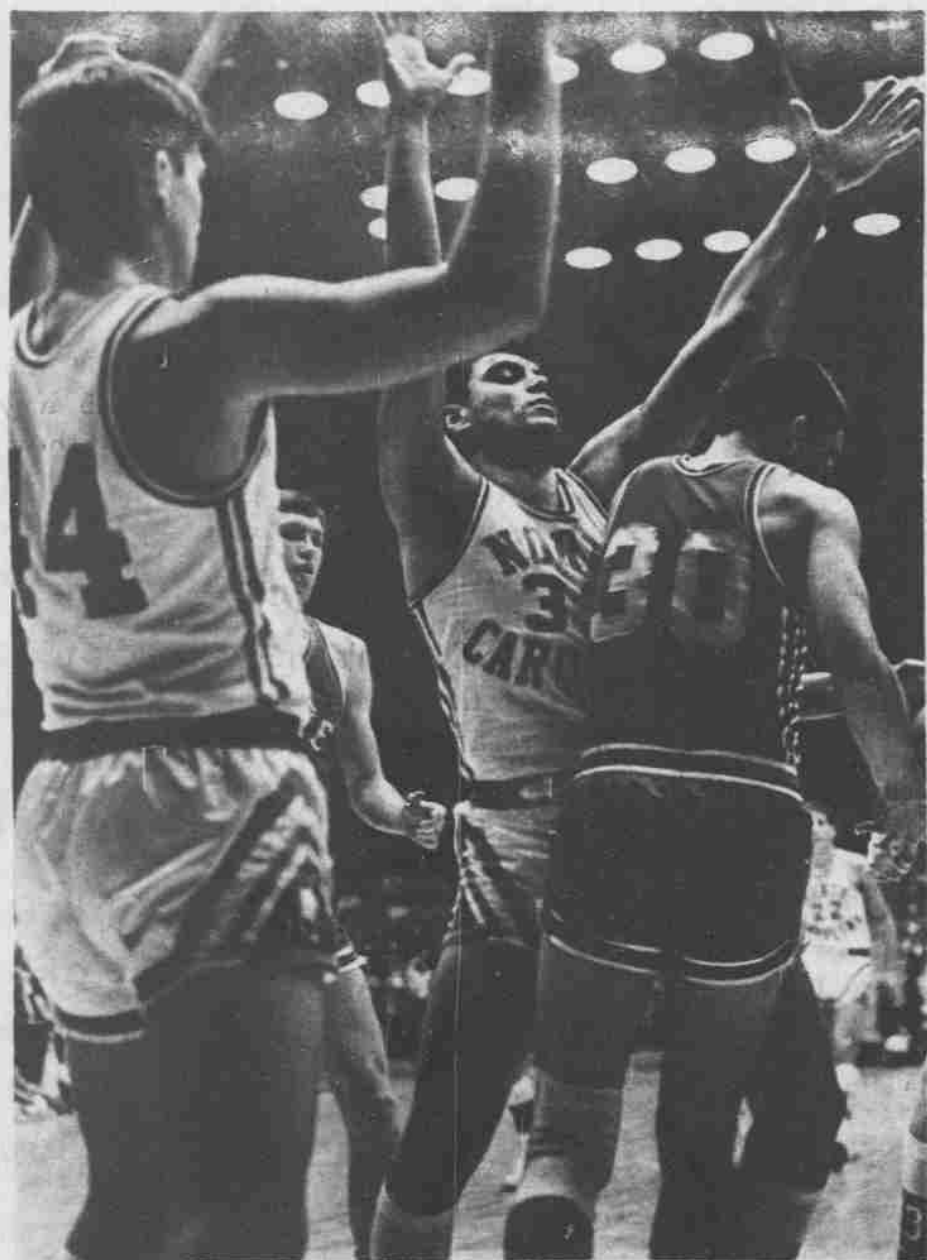
"Tom and Mark have been invaluable to us in tight situations," Miller continued. "They have come off the bench all season to give us lifts and have really meant a lot to us."

"What can I say about them?" asked Dick Grubar. "They are all real fine ball players, and I've enjoyed playing with them an awful lot. We'll all miss them next year."

"Lewis has really shown great leadership this year, said Bill Bunting. "He's made the transition to guard real well I think. He's really one of the greatest."

"Tom and Mark have both been a tremendous inspiration to me," Bill continued. "Tom's great hustle and desire has been a real inspiration to all the team and Mark has given us a real good big man we could turn to when Rusty or myself needed a rest."

"About this time Gerald Tuttle interrupted and said that he wanted to say something about the seniors. "I'm really going to miss every one of them next year," he said with a sly smile on his face, "but I at least think Tom and Bob could leave us the tube in their room for old time sakes."



By Bob Lewis, Tom Gauntlett And Mark Mirken As Told To Jim Fields.

DTH Photos by Gene Wang, Steve Adams and Mike McGowan

