Miller's Life Not All Cheers

by Al Thomas

Larry Miller has become something of a folk hero to Carolina basketball fans here and across the state.

Just the mention of the name "Larry Miller" tends to bring out a wide smile and favorable shake of the head from those who followed his play here at UNC.

Miller's years here were spent basking in the sun of a continuous stream of plaudits, and in return Miller helped make Carolina a national basketball powerhouse.

It was only three years ago that Miller walked this tree-shaded campus as a basketball hero, but in those three years much has changed.

The cheers were deafening when Miller played in Carmichael Auditorium–and the cheers were usually meant for him.

Now that Miller has moved into the professional ranks and joined the Carolina Cougars of the American Basketball Asoociation, the vibrating sound of cheering continues to echo in his ears–but very often it's for players other than Miller.

Miller picked up all the honors possible while playing here from 1965 through 1968. He led the Tar Heels to two Atlantic Coast Conference championships, two Eastern Regionals championships, and amassed enough points to mark him as the third leading scorer in Carolina's basketball history.

Miller, who stands 6–4, sports shaggy dark hair and plays forward, had a rousing start in professional ball with the Los Angeles Stars. He was playing in most of the games, was scoring consistently, and was being groomed as a future pro star.

On the sidelines, the muscular Miller was making Los Angles' social scene, appearing on the "Dating Game"–and winning the girl.

Miller was soon talked into leaving that lush California coast for the state where he grew into a famous college player.

This time, however, Miller's basketball life in North Carolina would be different.

A Different Life

His first year with the Cougars was not the success that had been anticipated.

Miller averaged 10.9 points and 5.2 rebounds a game, but for the high-jumping Miller it was a giant come-down. He played in 80 games for the Cougars, only four less than the most played by any Cougar member, but Miller and many other people realized that during much of those games he was in a disappointing and unfamiliar position–on the bench.

During the Cougar exhibition season this year, which began two weeks ago, Miller has seen more action than last year, but his play has still been inconsistent–scoring 21 points in one game only to follow with a six point performance.

"I was really optimistic at my first arrival back to North Carolina," Miller said before the exhibition season began. "I was disappointed to leave Los Angeles but the people here are really great."

Miller spent a long time talking about his enthusiastic fans in the state, but finally discuseed what could be behind his recent slump in the scoring and playing-time columns.

"In proball," MIller said, "you aren't always played exactly for ability. You get positionized and then personality gets into it. If you make up for any shortcomings with desire, it doesn't really matter."

Miller cautioned, however, that he was talking about a general situation and not specifically about himself.

Personality Clashes

"I've seen it happen," he continued, "when good players don't play because of personality clashes with coaches, managers, or even other players. This part of pro ball is probably the toughest to get accustomed to."

Miller lowered his head slightly, glanced at the recently scrubbed concrete floor, and added, "The excitement in basketball is gone for me now.

"I see it coming back but right now (before the exhibition schedule got underway) all the excitement of college ball, when every game meant a great deal, is gone.

"In pro ball," Miller continued, "it's every man for himself. Everybody has his own job. You see so many friends being traded, you really don't get to develop the same relationships you did in college."

Miller does find much that he likes in pro basketball, however, saying he enjoys the freedom of play–on and off the basketball court.

"As long as you perform your job," he said, "pro ball doesn't place many restrictions on you in your private life."

While pro basketball and the style of living that surrounds it is part of him now, Miller said he senses the day will eventually come when he'll no longer trot onto a basketball court as part of a pro team.

"I do have plans for the future," he said. "I have millions of plans, but I go about things slowly and cautiously.

"Whatever happens, though," Miller added, "I want to always have a house and home in North Carolina. You know, all that Los Angeles glitter is not gold–it's a real plastic world."

Dooley Prediction

'Vandy Won't Be Shoe-In'

by Chris Cobbs
Sports Editor

The Carolina equipment manager won't pack any football shoes for the team's trip to Nashville this weekend.

Instead, says Coach Bill Dooley, the Tar Heels will borrow all footwear from host Vanderbilt.

This seemingly unusual situation arises from the fact that Dudley Field, site of the game, has artificial turf and the Tar Heels don't have the right kind of shoes to play on it.

Actually, it's standard procedure for the home team to furnish shoes with proper cleats when the visitors don't have them, Dooley told his weekly press luncheon.

While the Tar Heels won't be taking any shoes along, they will carry an undefeated record and No. 19 national ranking into the Saturday night contest.

The high-riding Tar Heels will also provide ample target material for a Vanderbilt squad rebounding from an upset of no small proportion last week, Dooley feels.

The Commodores suffered a 20–6 setback to Mississippi State as the Bulldogs won their first Southeastern Conference game in five years last Saturday.

Vandy lost to Carolina last year and in 1968 and thus has further incentive to be up for the Tar Heels, Dooley reminded the press.

"Coach Bill Pace has done a real good rebuilding job for them," Dooley said. "After we beat them last season, Vandy came back the next week to ship Alabama and win four of its last six."

Vandy had only one winning campaign in the last decade, that coming in Pace's first year, 1968, when the club went 5–4–1. Last year the mark slipped to 4–6.

"They will be the quickest team we have faced this year and we'll be catching them on the rebound.

"What happened to them last weekend can happen very easily to a football team....they just relaxed."

Running down key members of the Vandy offense, Dooley called quarterback Watson Brown a dangerous operative on the option play in addition to being a gifted passer.

"He's probably the fastest man on their team," the coach said. "Curt Chesley, his favorite receiver, isn't a sprinter but has an uncanny ability to find the open spot.

"Chesley has very good moves and darting quickness."

He is complemented by the largest tight end in collegiate circles, 6–5, 240 pound Karl Weiss, who has caught 40 passes as a two-year starter. Weiss is a destructive blocker, as his size would indicate, Dooley said.

"The line is not real big, with the guards and tackles weighing about 220, but they're quick," the UNC boss pointed out.

"Their defensive line is the same way, with one large man in middleguard Dave Leffers, who is 6–5, 238, and relatively light, fast men around him."

Monster man Sam Kiser was credited with a total of 17 tackles last week, Dooley related, and is one of the hardest hitters on the team.

"They also have two sophomores starting in the secondary, boys who beat out returning starters, so you know Coach Pace has a lot of confidence in the defensive backfield," continued Dooley.

"They were not ready to play last week, it seemed in the film, but that's gonna change, we know," he said, wrapping up his analysis of the upcoming contest.

Bill Dooley Gives Don McCauley A Pat On Back

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