

McADOO

*Despite a plethora of NBA laurels
happiness has escaped the Big Mac*

By PETE MITCHELL
Staff Writer

Of all the former UNC greats playing in last Saturday's Pro-Alumni basketball game, Robert McAdoo seemed like the epitome of a Carolina success story.

Only five years out of the Atlantic Coast Conference, McAdoo has already copped Rookie of the Year honors in the National Basketball Association along with Player of the Year and two league scoring titles. He's the Carolina boy making good in the big time — on the surface anyway. In reality, Bob McAdoo's five year saga since leaving Dean Smith is not a happy one.

McAdoo's was an unusual case from the start. Having grown up in Greensboro, he played two years at Vincennes Junior College before coming to Carolina as Smith's first and only junior transfer player.

The Tar Heels made it to the NCAA finals that year, 1972, with McAdoo leading the way. But the 6-foot-10, 210-pounder didn't stick around for his senior year, electing instead to chase the big bucks at the height of the NBA-ABA bidding wars.

He was a sure bet according to scouts, the kind that revives franchises. And that's exactly what the fans in Buffalo, N.Y., thought when their Braves snatched

McAdoo in the first round. His announcement to leave didn't go over too well in Chapel Hill and it wasn't long before they were roasting him on the shores of Lake Erie.

Having changed team colors to orange and black the year before, the Braves announced another change just hours after McAdoo signed a multi-year pact. They said they would wear Carolina blue and white uniforms for the 1973 season.

Of course, the rumor spread that McAdoo had demanded the change as part of his contract negotiations and the press was hounding the rookie from the start.

Ornery owner Paul Snyder had hired and fired three coaches in the team's three year existence, but brought in the tested and respected Jack Ramsay for the '73 season. Under Ramsay, the Buffalo fans assumed McAdoo would develop instantly into the star capable of transforming the Braves into a legitimate contender in the NBA East. They were calling him 'Big Mac' even before his first game.

With all of that going on, 'Big Mac' proceeded to have a pitiful first half of his rookie year. He seemed uncomfortable at forward and appeared to be in a constant daze, ambling up and down the court with those big, drooping eyes and his fists

clenched with two huge thumbs sticking straight out.

Snyder and company made excuses, pointing out that he was actually only as old as a college senior and needed time to mature. The press didn't like him because he wasn't very quotable. The frustrated fans wanted a winning team of some sort in Buffalo and grimaced at his horrible shooting percentage and fat six-figure contract.

"That was the night before Christmas, 1973, that McAdoo woke up and began giving the fans what they'd expected all along. The Braves played a game in Houston which was televised back to Western New York. McAdoo was unstoppable, hitting for 44 points with stockings full of rebounds and blocked shots.

"That first half of my rookie year was hell," McAdoo said after the Pro-Alumni game. "I knew I could do it and everybody kept talking about how I had all the tools. For some reason, it took awhile."

The next year, McAdoo led the league in scoring as the Braves secured a playoff berth for the first time. He repeated in 1975 and was also named Player of the Year.

"That team is the best I've ever played for," McAdoo said. "The one in '75 with Randy Smith, Jim McMillian, Garfield Heard and Ernie DiGregorio. We had the second best regular season record. We should've gone further in the playoffs."

Despite all the individual trophies and his team's progress, McAdoo never felt appreciated in Buffalo. First of all, Buffalo is an ice hockey town and the NHL's Sabres, who came into the league the same year the Braves joined the NBA, were wamers from the start. They sold out Memorial Auditorium every game while the Braves struggled to draw six or seven thousand.

The football Bills had O.J. Simpson, who was all alone as the city's sports hero. And the pro basketball audiences liked Ernie D.'s flamboyant style and local product Randy Smith much more than McAdoo.

"It wasn't like everyone wasn't aware of what I was doing up there," McAdoo explained. "I just didn't get the same kind of treatment people like O.J. got."

When it came time to negotiate a new contract in 1976, McAdoo brought in his statistics and Snyder submitted his. The

club's owner pointed out McAdoo's defensive deficiencies (the Braves gave up the most points of any team in 1975) as well as his center's inability to get the Braves into the NBA finals.

"If you look at the statistics, all the statistics, I was one of the top players in the league," McAdoo said. "I expected to be paid like one of the top five and Snyder didn't come near it."

The newspapers said Snyder offered McAdoo \$500,000 a year.

"That's wrong," McAdoo said. "Snyder was just trying to get the fans against me."

Whatever the case, McAdoo and high salaried Tom McMillen were shipped to the New York Knicks at mid-season for a mediocre center named John Gianelli and the Braves promptly dropped out of contention.

Soon after the lopsided trade, McAdoo returned to Buffalo amidst boos to score 41 points and 25 rebounds against his old teammates.

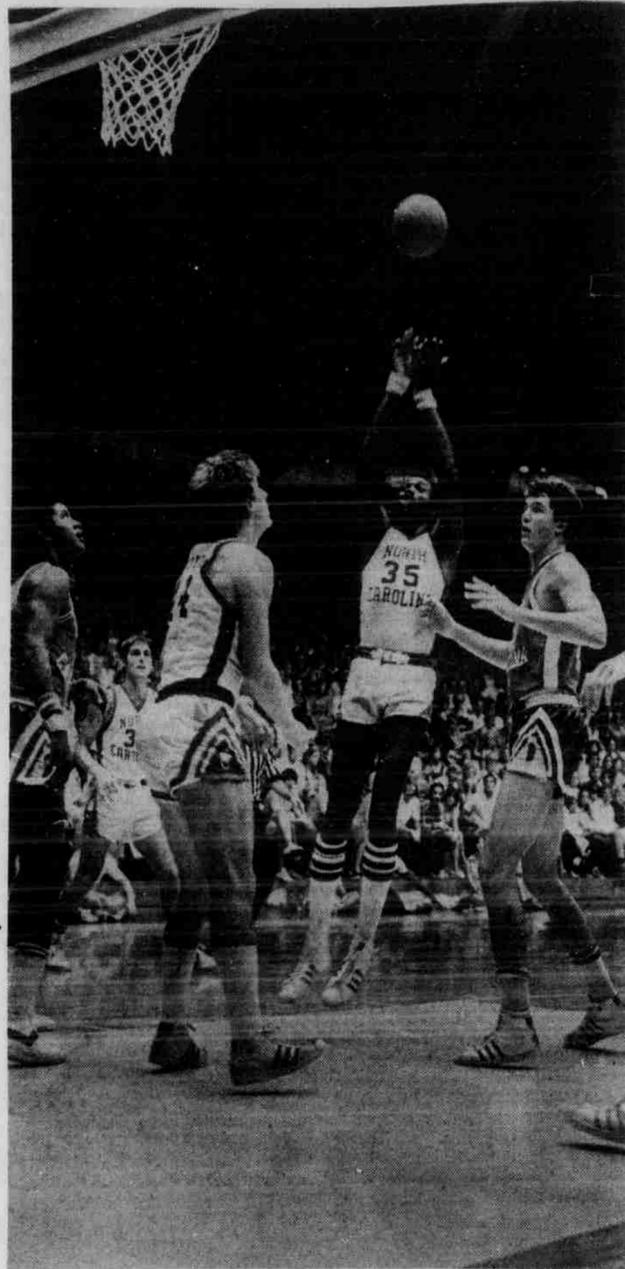
"I did play real hard that game," he recalled. "There was a lot of pride involved. I mean there's no question about the mental anguish and adjustment involved in the whole thing," McAdoo said. "I was unhappy with my contract and I did something about it."

Whatever it was that he was searching for in Buffalo, it's escaped him so far after half a season in Madison Square Garden. As predicted, McAdoo, Walt Frazier and Earl Monroe had trouble deciding who would shoot the ball last year and the Knicks were embarrassingly shut out of the playoffs.

Writers were quick to pounce on McAdoo, the newcomer, criticizing his obsession with shooting from the outside. Most of all, the New York press didn't tolerate his occasional lapses, having watched the traditionally stingy Knicks for years.

Individually, 'Big Mac' had another good year in '76-'77. Unfortunately, that's not enough. His team's got to win it all before the skeptics are silenced.

"I just go out there and do everything I can do," McAdoo said. "The critics are gonna criticize everybody anyway. I'm just waiting to be on a championship team; nobody can criticize that."



Bob McAdoo (35), is surrounded by teammate Dennis Wuycik (left) and opponent Mitch Kupchak (right) in Saturday's Pro-Alumni game. McAdoo was a junior, Wuycik a senior and Kupchak a senior in high school when Carolina advanced to the Final Four of 1972 national tournament.

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Sports show starts tonight

"Carolina Roundup," a sports program featuring a different guest each week, premieres today at 7 p.m. on WXYC-FM (89.3).

The show tonight will include interviews from the Pro-Alumni basketball game last weekend, a preview of the Richmond football game and reactions to the Kentucky game.

A member of the UNC football team will be the guest this week.

Listeners with call-in questions should call the station at 933-7768 before air-time.

5000 People Bought Bus Passes This Year.



Why didn't you?

If you live near a bus route and still travel around town by car every day, you'd better have a good excuse. Frankly, we can't think of one, though we've heard them all. But since you probably take your excuses seriously, let's take a look at the popular ones.

Convenience

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Cost

If you think riding a car is cheaper than riding a bus, look closely at the figures. According to transportation analysts, the cost of commuting by car is about 50¢ for the average trip. When you have a bus pass, the cost is just 8¢ a trip. And you don't have to worry about buying a new bus every two years, either.

Time

Just because buses are big doesn't mean they're slow. On a Chapel Hill bus, downtown is at most 23 minutes away. And a typical ride is usually 10 minutes or less. In fact, if you have to park your car some distance from where you're going, the bus can be faster.

Bad Expectations

Some people have a notion that riding a bus is unpleasant. Surveys show that those people aren't the ones who ride the buses. Chapel Hill bus riders say they enjoy riding buses, that they can relax and think better, too. Whose word would you take?

Don't pass up the pass.

You really don't need excuses. What you need is a bus pass. One pass, good for a year of unlimited rides is just \$40. You can get a pass at the Tax Office in the Municipal Building and at all First Citizens and CCB branch offices. Or if you work or go to school at UNC, contact the Traffic Office in the YMCA building.

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