



Tom Zaliagiris

Old No. 12 is gone forever. Not only is Phil Ford graduating in two weeks, but for the first time in 21 years, the University of North Carolina retired the jersey of a varsity athlete. Ford's jersey, which he wore while bringing so many honors to himself and the University, was officially retired Wednesday night at the annual Carolina basketball banquet.

The occasion at the Carolina Inn was sort of a last hurrah, a chance to say one last goodbye to the seniors on the team: Ford, Tom Zaliagiris and Geff Crompton, a time for them to say goodbye and a time for memories.

"One time when I was a freshman coach (Eddie) Fogler was giving me a ride to Granville," Ford told the banquet. "He said the years were going to go fast. I said then that they wouldn't. Now, I can't believe it's over."

Ford's performances during the last four years were capped this year when he was named national player of the year and named to every All-America team. He earned the honor of being the first Carolina athlete to have his jersey retired since the 1957 national basketball player of the year, Lennie Rosenbluth, led Carolina to the national championship. Chancellor N. Ferebee Taylor, in announcing the retirement of Ford's jersey, called the top pro prospect "a young man who has brought great recognition to himself and the University, and who is a truly outstanding individual."

The banquet was an opportunity to reflect on the careers of the seniors and, in particular, a glance back at the most recent season. But to reflect on a career such as Ford's, great moments from the last four years in Carolina basketball were refreshed in the minds of the 400 persons present, such as Ford's freshman year, when Carolina defeated heavily favored N.C. State in the ACC Tournament to end the David Thompson era in the conference.

Walter Davis, the 1978 NBA rookie-of-the-year and still one of the most well-liked former

One last farewell

Three UNC seniors 'can't believe it's over'

By GENE UPCHURCH
DTH Contributor

Carolina players in Chapel Hill, presented Ford with the team's most valuable player award, and brought back more memories.

"Last year, I got some awards, but felt like a lot of other people should get them," Davis said. "I helped a lot with recruiting, but I guess you always remember your first love. Phil was the first player I ever helped to recruit."

Coach Dean Smith told the banquet he was proud of the 1977-78 edition of the basketball Tar Heels because the championships they won represented goals that had been conquered.

"But this is the seniors' team, not old Dean's team," he said "I'm very proud of the team. They represented the University well. They played at one time like the best team in the country. Maybe I made a mistake and told them that. But this was a year they could look back on and be very proud of. But I challenge this year's team. We're losing three seniors, but Duke and State have everybody back. And Walter won't be back to play."

Speakers for the banquet traditionally are the seniors.

"It's really not like saying goodbye," Zaliagiris

told the audience "It just means I won't be running around in Carolina-blue shorts anymore. I was always stubborn, but coach Smith always put up with me. Like after a loss, he'd talk to each player for a few minutes, but always talk to me last. I thought it was because my name started with a "Z" but our five-minute talk always lasted an hour."

Crompton, the big center who had numerous problems during his eligibility, admitted that it took patience for the coaching staff to endure his continual hardships.

"Coach Smith couldn't figure me out and sometimes I couldn't figure him out," he said.

Ford's speech mostly was humorous as he recounted tales about recruiting adventures such as his family preparing a feast when Carolina recruiters were in town and nothing when other schools' recruiters were around.

"My family never pressured me about where to go to school," he said. "But I somehow got the hint and ended up here in the fall."

Team awards were presented at the banquet, with Ford winning or sharing eight of the 14 awards. He shared with sophomore Mike O'Koren the All-America and two all-tournament awards and won outright the coaches award for the most assists, best free-throw percentage, most valuable player, outstanding senior and national player of the year. O'Koren won the outstanding rebounder, best field goal percentage shooter and overall statistical leader awards. Al Wood was honored with the Butch Bennett award, presented to the most influential freshman player. The outstanding defensive player award went to Dudley Bradley. The most inspirational player as voted by the team was awarded to Ged Doughton.

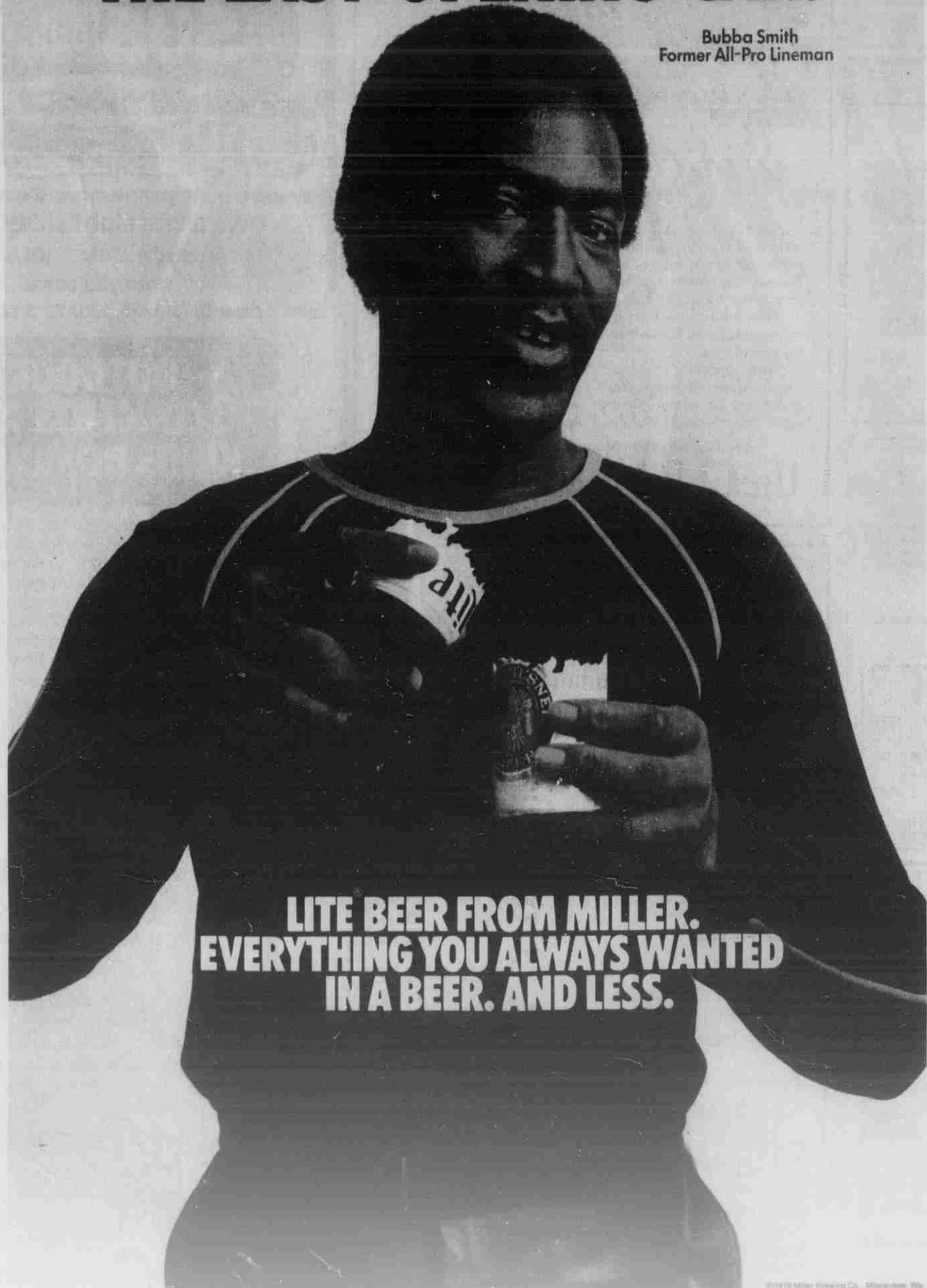
The banquet is sponsored by the Durham Tar Heel Club.



Geff Crompton

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Bubba Smith
Former All-Pro Lineman



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