



Jennifer Alley

Right up her Alley

Carolina's women's basketball coach got into the business by accident. But now Jennifer Alley's glad she did. She hopes Carolina will be too.

by RICK SCOPPE

Down 36 points to Cal Poly at halftime in her final game as coach of High Point College, Jennifer Alley told her team if they cut the deficit to 20 they'd win.

With 3:35 left they did just that, but Alley's prophecy was a bit off. High Point lost by one point and Alley's five-year stint at High Point was over.

It was time to move and for Alley the move was to a larger school, to UNC, where last year she became UNC's first full-time women's basketball coach. In her first year she led the women to a 16-13 mark and is optimistic about her second year.

"We're getting some offense generated and our shot selection is very good so far," Alley said after her squad had scrimmaged Old Dominion. "I don't remember a single shot that was taken in a bad situation or at a bad time."

Of course. What else could be expected from a team coached by a woman who professes a style similar to that of Dean Smith?

"It's like being able to go to classes with the master" Alley said of Smith. "I watch his practices quite a bit."

This year Smith may get a chance to glance at two women's games because twice the women will play preliminary games before the men take the court.

The first preliminary game will pit UNC's women against Duke before the UNC-Poland game. On Jan. 13 UNC's women will take on Appalachian State prior to the men's game against Duke in Carmichael Auditorium.

"We hope in the near future to be as representative in basketball on the women's side as we are on the men's side," Alley said. "I do feel the girls correlate our men's team with our women's team. Recruits see how good the men's team is and feel that carries over into the women's program."

Alley's style of basketball is an offense geared to run. "I like a lot of pressure and the quick

transition game. We run on every opportunity, and maybe even when there isn't the opportunity," Alley said. "I think the girls enjoy that type of game. That was basically the style they were playing when I got here."

Alley attended Appalachian as an undergraduate and received her masters at UNC-Greensboro. She then taught on the secondary level before going to High Point.

"Actually, I got into coaching by accident. I was teaching on the junior high level and part of my job was to coach. Then when I went to High Point I coached field hockey and tennis, but the next year the basketball coach left and the field hockey coach came back. So, I ended up coaching volleyball and basketball."

In her third year as High Point's basketball coach she led her team to a 26-2 record and from that point she says the pressure began to build.

"I don't feel as much pressure here as I did those last years at High Point," she said. "There was a lot of pressure that last year (after her 26-2 mark) and we went undefeated (during the regular season) with a 27-0 record. But we lost in the quarterfinals (of the small college tournament) and then were placed in the consolation bracket."

There her team lost in the finals to Cal Poly.

"Now that I'm here I'm able to concentrate solely on basketball. At High Point I also had to teach a full load," Alley said. "Here, the pressure I feel is pressure I have put on myself. We're not going to achieve excellence overnight, but we want to feel the total program is building on a solid foundation. Each woman comes in here forms a building block on this foundation."

"I guess I feel even busier here than I did at High Point, though," she said. "I don't know, I guess you do whatever you do you put all you can into it, whether it's coaching and teaching, or just coaching." ■

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