

# 23 Jordan

## Fills vacancy in first year, takes control in his second

BY MICHAEL DeSISTI  
Sports Editor

Nearly two years ago, just one day after his baseline jumpshot with 0:17 to play against Georgetown had given North Carolina its first national championship since 1957, Michael Jordan stepped to the microphone in Kenan Stadium and told 25,000 well-wishers he was looking forward to winning three more.

A lot has changed since then. Michael Jordan, freshman guard out of Wilmington, has become Michael Jordan, North Carolina's Giant Killer. And now he doesn't talk about winning three more national championships.

Two more will do.

Nobody then, including Jordan, had ever considered the long-term significance — though never intended — the remark would eventually have. Jordan was still relatively unaware of how much had really happened in the span of three days in New Orleans, and what a national championship meant to the multitude of people who called Dean Smith god only half in jest.

The major concern at the time was for junior All-America James Worthy, whose NBA market value had doubled with a tournament MVP performance in what would be the last two games of his collegiate and amateur career.

"One more year," went the chorus from the crowd, in anticipation of Worthy's turn on the grass stage along the stadium's east sideline.

But Worthy opted to avoid the issue, to talk about Smith's first national championship and remain silent with regard to his plans for the future.

The issue had been brought to Worthy, and he stepped swiftly aside. When the issue came to Jordan late this fall, he held his ground, perhaps a bit surprised at the prospect. And as a result he was misunderstood.

"I just said I was planning on staying four years," Jordan said later. "I never said definitely that I would stay."

The state of North Carolina, the city of Chapel Hill and the University itself had all breathed a collective sigh of relief when the UPI ran a story in early October that Jordan would return for his senior year in 1984, *Sporting News* Player-of-the-Year, All-America, and 20 points per game and 78 steals as a sophomore or not.

The question had been hanging around basketball circles since the end of last season, when Jordan emerged as the consensus best player in college basketball, save a few obligatory votes for Ralph Sampson in his senior year.

It had been hanging around news rooms. It had been hanging around classrooms. It had been hanging around everywhere but in Jordan's own head.

"I really haven't thought about it," he said. "Everybody's been thinking about it for me."

The media and the public had been set-

ting Jordan's agenda.

"If he says it's 99 percent sure he's coming back and one percent miracle that he'll go pro, people are going to start commenting on what he's going to do in March," Smith said. "It's a 100 percent decision at this point. That's his decision and that should end all the questions."

In two short years, Jordan went from being the freshman with the transient tongue and that quick first step, to North Carolina's Captain America in Converse Hi-tops; from the kid who needed game time at guard, to the man to look for with the Tar Heels lacking points and the scoreboard lacking time.

He went from being the only starter on North Carolina's championship team absent from the cover of *Sports Illustrated's* college basketball issue, to having his image inked on most every preseason publication on the newsstands, including the one of initial neglect.

And he went for none of it.

"I just tried to keep things in perspective," Jordan said. "I tried not to look too far ahead of me."

"I didn't want to get big-headed or anything like that. I just wanted to be the same person I was before. It's just the type of person I am."

"On the court I may have improved a great deal, but off the court I haven't changed at all."

On the court Jordan had made it an occasional practice to take matters into his own hands his sophomore year.

There was the steal of the inbounds pass with 0:04 to play against Tulane, and the jumpshot from a yard outside the 19-foot line to send the game into overtime that followed.

There was the block-from-nowhere against Maryland to preserve a one-point win; Chuck Driesell had driven the right baseline and was ready to lay the ball in off the glass at the horn when Jordan introduced himself in mid-air.

And there was the crucial steal and final four points to erase the tail end of a 16-point Virginia lead and any semblance of a sneer from Sampson's face in a 64-63 win in front of a hysterical capacity crowd in Carmichael Auditorium and a network TV audience.

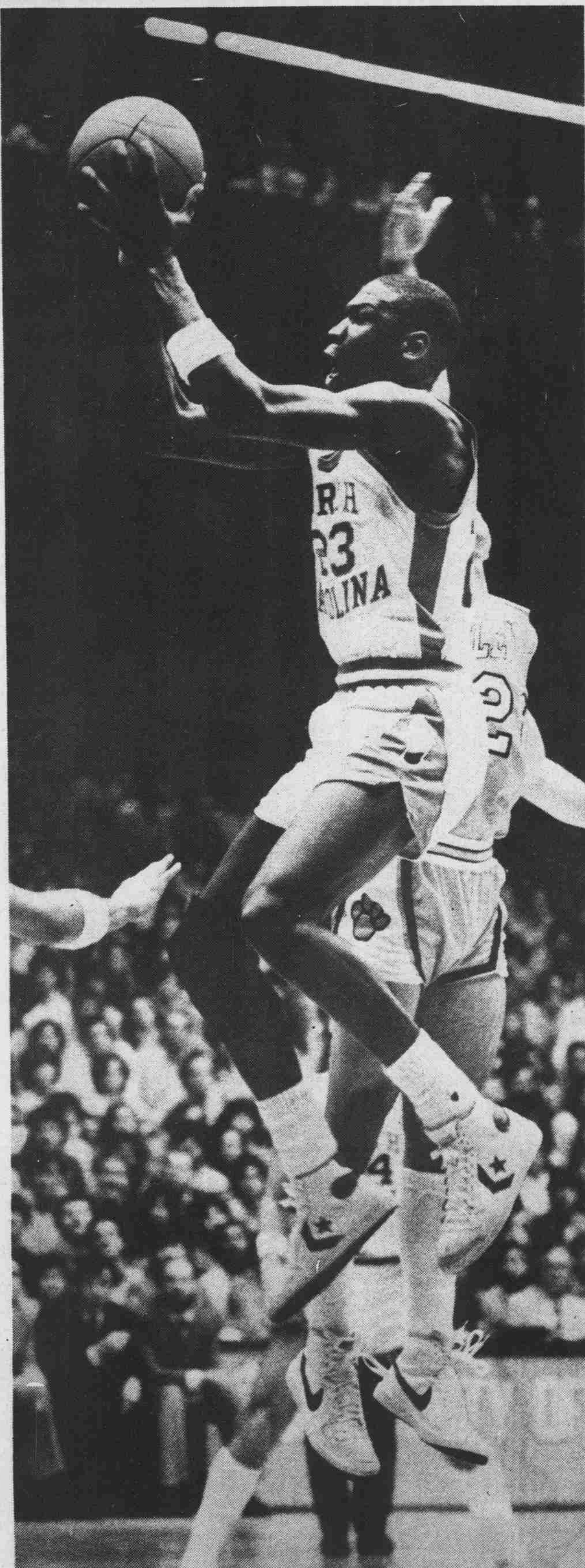
It became increasingly difficult for the shot in New Orleans that immortalized him on the cover of the 1982 Chapel Hill and Carrboro phone directory to be the dominating association with the name Jordan.

"I'm just in the right place at the right time, trying to do the best job that I can," he said. "I think I do (react well to pressure), but I don't go looking for it. It just comes to me in some way and I try to compensate for that."

Jordan seems to possess an implicit confidence, a great security and satisfaction in his own person that doesn't overwhelm, that doesn't impose itself on others.

It just wins.

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Junior Michael Jordan has acquired a national reputation and a lot of honors in his two short but event-filled years at North Carolina.