

Papa predicts a Bright future

Lauby to aid Brower, Davis on mound; freshmen provide new look for softball

By Warren Hynes
Assistant Sports Editor

Papa's got a brand new ballclub. While nine experienced players return to this year's UNC softball team, the addition of six freshmen gives coach Donna Papa's group a whole different look.

The softball squad, 38-18 last year, enters the 1991 season ranked sixth in the South Region. Papa, starting her sixth season, said she felt more comfortable with this club than any she's had.

"This is the first year that I really felt I could put everybody out on the field," she said.

The new-look Tar Heels hope to have bolstered an already strong pitching staff and revved up a lineup that is built for speed.

On the mound, pitchers Tracy Brower and Yvette Davis combined for a spectacular 36-18 record and a 1.68 earned run average last year. But the two pitched every inning of every game for the Tar Heels (UNC won two games by forfeit). It was obvious that North Carolina needed some depth on the mound.

Enter the Los Angeles Times high school softball player of the year. Paige Lauby, a freshman right-hander from El Toro, Calif., can bring that vital depth to the UNC rotation.

"Last year it was Tracy and Yvette, Tracy and Yvette," Papa said. "But now we have the luxury of having three pitchers that are going to see a lot of game time, and I think our pitchers' arms are going to be fresher for longer."

Davis, a sophomore right-hander from Aurora, Colo., comes off a stellar freshman campaign during which she went 19-8 with a 1.25 ERA.



Sonya Bright

"Yvette had a great year last year as a freshman," Papa said. "I look to her to be even better this year because she's got that one year behind her."

Brower, a senior right-hander from Newton, Pa., is on the verge of bursting through the UNC record books this season. The two-year co-captain is three wins away from becoming North Carolina's all-time victory leader. She has a career record of 54-29 and a 1.37 ERA.

Last year, Brower was 17-10 with a 1.97 ERA and 78 strikeouts. As impressive as those numbers are, they fell short of her sophomore season stats of 23-8, 1.26 ERA and 125 Ks. There was a reason for this: Brower had partially torn ligaments in her right shoulder which were not discovered until after the season. Papa said she hoped her

Softball

Head Coach: Donna Papa (Connecticut 1978)

Career Record: 198-97-1

Record at School: 169-82-1 (sixth year)

Assistant Coaches: Robin Payne-Wills, Tracey Narwid

1990 Record: 38-18

Starters Returning/Lost: 9/2

Top Returnees: Theresa Buscemi (Jr.), Tracy Brower (Sr.), Vicki Parrott (Sr.), Sonya Bright (So.), Michelle Rupp (Jr.), Lisa McGloin (Jr.), Julie O'Shields (Jr.), Yvette Davis (So.)

Top Newcomers: Paige Lauby (El Toro, Calif.), Vicki Huff (St. James, N.Y.), Beverly Smith (Houston), Amy Cole (Rural Hall)

Facility: Finley Field

two-year captain would return at full strength this year.

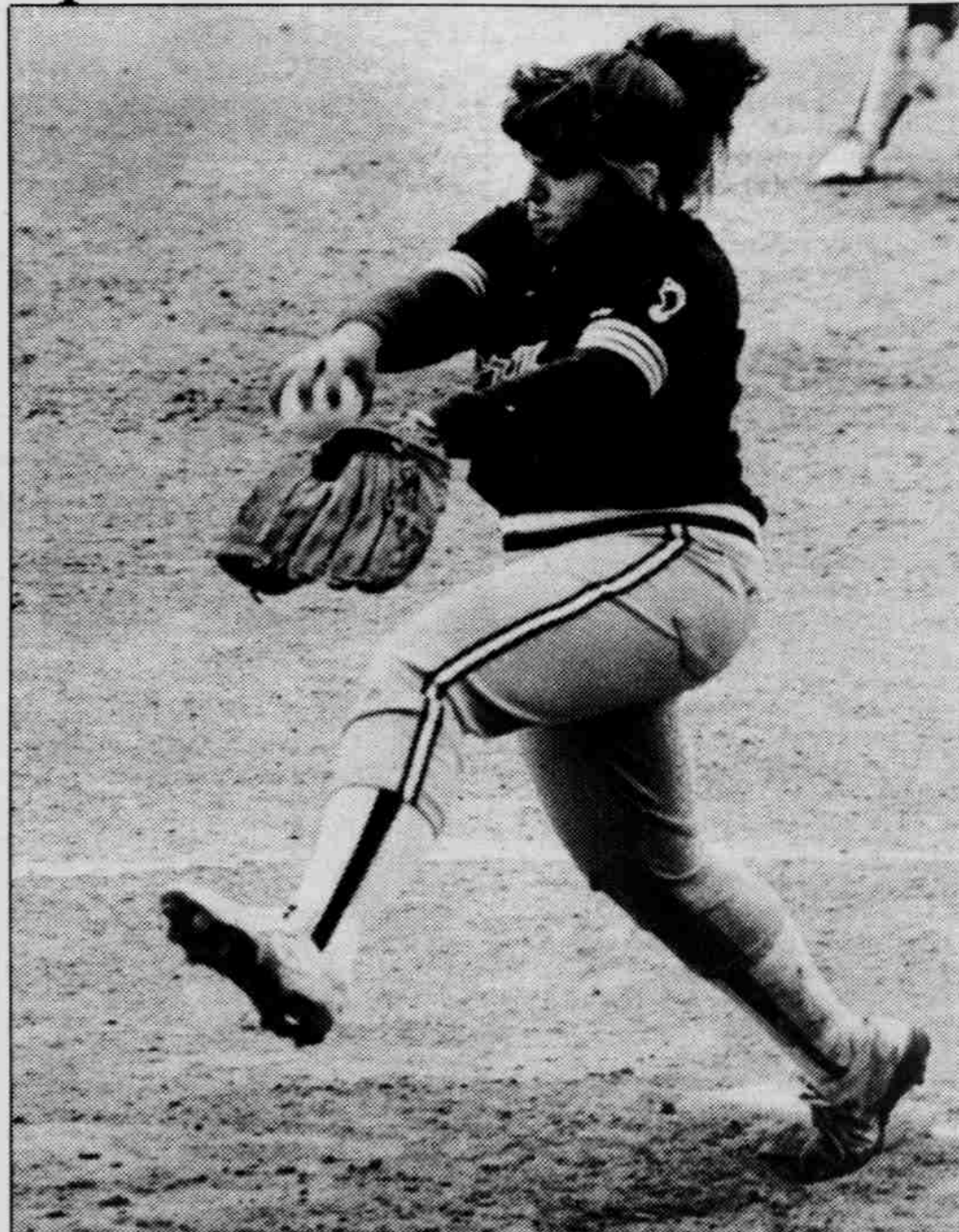
"Hopefully she'll be able to go with it and run this year," Papa said. "She's been in so many situations for us, and that experience, you just can't teach that."

On offense, the Tar Heels will sport a lineup that is fleet of foot. Juniors Theresa Buscemi (14 stolen bases last year) and Julie O'Shields (10), sophomore Sonya Bright (8) and freshmen Amy Cole and Vicki Huff lead the UNC speed squad.

"We're going to be able to be a little more aggressive on the bases," Papa said. "We've got speed. We've got the people that can execute the running slaps and get on base. We've got some people that can hit the ball. I think that's kind of a good mix."

The UNC coach can only hope that the mix is enough to make up for the loss of one of the school's greatest players. Tracey Narwid graduated in 1990 after four tremendous years at UNC. The three-time All-South Region centerfielder holds UNC career records in hits, home runs, runs batted in, runs scored, slugging percentage and stolen bases — to name just a few.

"She's left a big void, and now we're looking to fill that void," Papa said.



DTH/Evan Eile

Sophomore Yvette Davis led the Tar Heels with 19 victories and a 1.25 ERA last year

"You don't find a lot of players like that all packed in one."

The UNC outfield, while long in potential, is short in experience. Only Buscemi has extensive collegiate playing time.

Buscemi, a Ronkonkoma, N.Y. native, has started 106 consecutive games, dating back to the first game of her freshman year. She hit .319 last year, more than 100 percentage points higher than the previous season. Because of

her increased production, Buscemi has taken over the lineup's third slot, vacated by Narwid.

Buscemi and Cole both will start, but Papa hasn't decided yet who will play center field and who will play right field.

In left field, either Bright or freshman Beverly Smith will get the nod. Papa said she hoped to keep both in the lineup by using one as a designated hitter. Bright, a Durham native, batted .257 with a .353 on-base percentage last year as UNC's leadoff batter. She will use her specialty, the running slap bunt, to try to ignite UNC rallies.

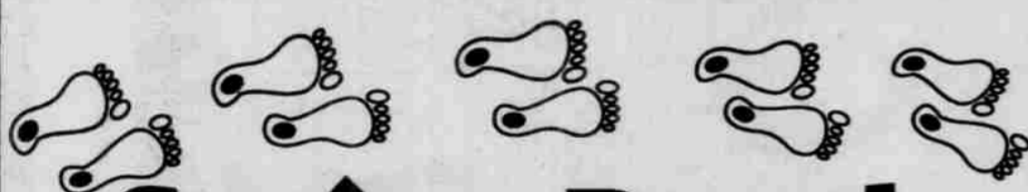
North Carolina's infield should be well-rounded. At first base, sophomore Jeannie Carrow and Huff will probably split the duties at first base. Carrow started 49 games last year at first, batting .173. She was second on the squad in fielding percentage. Huff, a St. James, N.Y., native, has impressed her coach with the effort she's given in practice.

Senior co-captain Vicki Parrott anchors the infield at second base. She begins her third season as UNC's second sacker, sporting a .945 fielding percentage. Despite a .177 career batting average, Parrott is a team catalyst, Papa said.

"One thing about Vicki is she's not the fastest person on the team, she's not the slowest person on the team by any means — but she makes things happen," Papa said.

O'Shields starts her second straight season at shortstop. The Wilmington native hit .257 last year.

Junior Michelle Rupp returns to third base for her second full season at the hot



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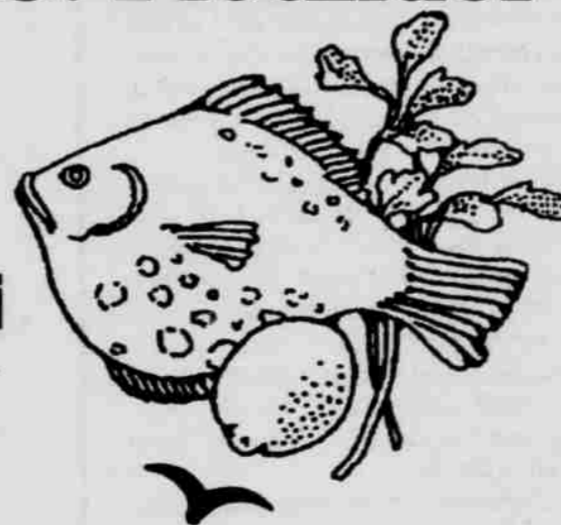
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