2005 - 2006 Wake Forest

11/03/05 vs. Winston-Salem State (exh.) 5:00 PM
11/18/05 vs. Mercer 7:00 PM
11/26/05 at Davidson 2:00 PM
11/29/05 at Towson 7:30 PM
12/02/05 at St. John's 7:30 PM
12/03/05 at Northwestern/Miami 5:30 PM
12/14/05 vs. UNC Greensboro 2:00 PM
12/17/05 vs. Coppin State 7:00 PM
12/19/05 vs. Lipscomb University 6:30 PM
12/22/05 at Rice 11:00 AM
12/28/05 at Richmond 7:00 PM
12/31/05 vs. Kentucky 7:00 PM
01/02/06 at Duke 6:30 PM
01/07/06 vs. North Carolina State 11:00 AM
01/11/06 vs. Morgan State 3:00 PM

CAROLINA CHEVY DEALER
Women's Basketball Schedule

01/15/06 at Clemson 3:00 PM
01/19/06 vs. Virginia Tech 7:00 PM
01/22/06 at Georgia Tech 1:00 PM
01/27/06 vs. North Carolina 7:00 PM
01/29/06 vs. Maryland 3:00 PM
02/02/06 at Boston College 7:00 PM
02/05/06 vs. Miami 3:00 PM
02/09/06 at North Carolina State 7:00 PM
02/12/06 vs. Clemson 1:00 PM
02/18/06 vs. Virginia 3:00 PM
02/21/06 vs. Savannah State 7:00 PM
02/23/06 at Florida State 7:00 PM
02/26/06 at Virginia Tech 2:00 PM
03/05/06 ACC Tournament Greensboro TBA
03/05/06 ACC Tournament Greensboro TBA
## 2005-2006 Wake Forest Men's Basketball Schedule

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He committed to play basketball at Wake Forest after his sophomore year in high school. Only now, after a delay of more than three years, will sophomore Cameron Stanley finally see some playing time.

But he didn’t play because he wasn’t talented enough, or because he violated unspecified team rules. Stanley, last year’s only scholarship freshman, suffered a knee injury during the seventh game of his junior season in high school, making him ineligible to play for the rest of the year. The injury persisted through his freshman year of college, so Stanley redshirted his first season with the team.

But it didn’t take him the whole season to recover from his injury. “I knew at the beginning I wasn’t ready to play, but toward the middle and end of the season, I knew I was ready to play at the college level,” Stanley said.

Though Stanley said it was frustrating not being able to play, particularly during the post-season, he said that he has actually benefited from his year as a redshirt. “Last year I got to experience a lot of things that most freshmen don’t get to experience. I got to see exactly how competitive games were and how much faster the games are in college. Now I’m trying to use that to my advantage.”

Aside from gaining experience on the court, Stanley said he learned valuable lessons off the court as well. “Patience was key. Being a redshirt taught me that you can’t rely on one thing to get you through life. An injury like that can happen to anyone. That’s one of the reasons I committed to Wake Forest because it’s such a prestigious academic school so if basketball doesn’t work out, I have something to fall back on.”

As a redshirted player on the scout team, Stanley’s main role was to help prepare the team for their games. Additionally, his personal goal “was to get better as a player and get healthy, which I am,” Stanley said. He said that he is 120 percent better and it was quite clear how eager Stanley is to play his first game as a Demon Deacon.

“Last year, I competed in everything except for the games,” he said. “It was hard not being able to make a contribution. It’s exciting knowing that I’m finally going to play. I think that this year all that hard work is gonna pay off.”

As the extra time with the team might seem a blessing, it might also be a burden for Stanley as expectations for him are higher than those for the “regular” freshman. However, Stanley said, “I’m up to the challenge. It’s been so long since I’ve competed in games with this much importance. I can’t wait until the first game.”

The exhibition game Nov. 3 versus Winston-Salem State University marked Stanley’s first game since his injury. The date also was significant for Stanley as it is the first game that he and senior Eric Williams played together on the same team. Stanley and Williams competed against each other while they attended rival high schools.

“They never beat us while we were in school,” Stanley said.

He reminisced of a particular matchup when he was a sophomore and Williams was a senior.

“I dunked on Eric Williams. That was the highlight of my athletic career. It was great. I held him to eight points which was his career low in high school.”

How about Jan. 8 when Duke comes to the Joel? Maybe he’ll dunk on another Williams then, too.

Though Stanley is technically a freshman on the court, he is mentally and physically prepared to play as a seasoned sophomore.

“I cannot wait,” he said.

We can’t either.
Among his many good qualities, Hale is generous and efficient as a player. His role as a guard is reflected in his willingness to cooperate with the demands of his teammates and coaches.

“Whatever the team needs me to do, if they need me to slash I’ll slash, if they need me to shoot the ball I’ll shoot the ball, if they need me to penetrate I’ll penetrate, whatever Coach Prosser needs me to do I’ll do,” Hale said.

After just months of practicing with the team, Hale is optimistic about its abilities and keeps a positive mindset for tip-off Nov. 3.

“Right now you see us playing and you see everything looking good so you don’t see anything looking bad, so I can’t say anything,” he said.

Citing players like Richard Hamilton as possible role models for his game, Hale prefers to instead just focus on his own.

“I just try to go out there and play hard and see what happens,” he said.

He handles his comparisons to Chris Paul in the same matter.

“Nobody can replace that dude. I’m not trying to replace him, I’m just trying to come in here and play hard and do the things that I’m capable of doing and the things Coach Prosser has me doing.”

During his tenure Hale aspires to be successful in national tournaments, citing the NCAAs as his most anticipated experience.

“The thing I’m most excited for has to be NCAA tournament. Everybody comes to college looking for the NCAA tournament, that’s the biggest thing,” he said. With the Screamin’ Demons club hitting an all-time high in numbers, Hale is also hyped to experience them first-hand.

“I love them. I see them at the games and on TV, ESPN, they get you pumped up, make you work hard on D and make you want to make shots, it’s just a big part of Wake Forest basketball,” Hale said.

But the stress of being a top-recruit doesn’t weigh on Hale. When off the court he admits his favorite thing is to just have a good time.

“I like acting stupid and smiling, just being stupid and laughing,” he said.

Regardless of the outcome of the upcoming season Hale is just overjoyed and grateful at having a chance to play.

“I’m just happy to be here, thank you all for having me.”
When Head Coach Skip Prosser calls out the name “Dream Weaver” in practice, there is no doubt who he is speaking to.

Whether it is one of his coaches or fellow players, David Weaver always listens, knowing he will play an important role if Wake Forest basketball is going to have a successful season and make it deeper into the NCAA Tournament.

“My goal is to help these guys get to the Final Four or a National Championship,” he said.

Working hard and succeeding both on the court and off has been a habit in Weaver’s life thus far. Graduating in the top 10 percent of his high school class, he was used to handling adversity and the crazy schedule that playing basketball can bring. For his efforts, Weaver was named a North Carolina Scholar-Athlete his senior year.

Over the summer, however, he knew he had to get stronger if he is going to succeed at the Division I level. “I worked a lot in the weight room trying to get stronger,” Weaver said. “I’ve got to compete with these guys.”

Weaver won’t, however, be the only big man on the team. With center Eric Williams returning for his senior year, Weaver has observed Big E and knows what he has to do to be successful at this level.

“He told me you have to play tough no matter what, even on the practice floor,” Weaver said. “Practice like you are going to play in the games and go hard all the time.”

Believing his game resembles that of NBA star Marcus Camby, Weaver knows his athleticism and physical fitness will help him during the season.

“I think my ability to run the floor is the strongest part of my game,” Weaver said. “I can beat a lot of guys down the floor which allows me to get easy buckets.”

Weaver has a nice jump shot and his range is recorded as 15 feet. To his advantage, much like that of Levy, Weaver’s arm span is 7-foot-3-inches and he is almost close to dunking without leaving the ground.

Along with playing for his high school team at Charles D. Owen High School in Black Mountain, Weaver was also a member of the North Carolina Gaters, a good AAU basketball team. And as he continued to get better with each year in high school, Weaver also made strides in another sport.

Believe it or not, the 6-foot-10-inch, 224 pound center/forward was also a track star. A four-year letterman in track and field, Weaver participated in the 200-meter, long jump, triple jump and high jump. Adding to his basketball résumé, he finished second in the state 2A meet in the high jump, clearing 6’6”.

Ranked as the 27th best power forward in the nation by rivals.com, Weaver will be thrown into the mix of college basketball rather early. However judging from his accolades from senior year which include All-Conference, All-Western North Carolina, a Nike All-American and All-State, Weaver has already proven himself.

But coming out of high school, there are always important lessons and challenges that come with the transition to DI.

“I think it’s just the strength,” Weaver said. “For anybody playing against high-school guys, the strength of the players is different.”

Although Weaver was quick to point out how excited he was to be playing for Wake Forest, he was more impressed with how well he thought the team has been playing so far and how well they have practiced.

“I can’t even describe it but we are looking so good right now it’s scary,” Weaver said. “People underestimate us saying this is a rebuilding year — it’s not.”

Whatever the rumors, Weaver is among six of the 12 Deacs who have yet to play in a game wearing the old black and gold uniform. A very enthusiastic yet shy member of the team, Weaver has great potential and looks to showcase his talent on a very bright stage.
Kevin Swinton

By Gerard McMahon
Old Gold & Black Reporter

Despite the Demon Deacons returning only two starters to last year’s 27-win team and competition for playing time seemingly wide open, incoming freshman power forward Kevin Swinton still totes the Wake Forest company party line regarding his playing time.

“I’m coming in here to an experienced team and I just want to do whatever it takes to win games,” Swinton said.

As arguably Wake Forest’s most highly touted 2005 recruit, theinsiders.com ranked the 6-foot-7-inch Greensboro native as the 13th best power forward in his class.

Swinton also earned recognition as a First Team All-State selection, a fourth team Parade All-American and as the most valuable player of the North Carolina East-West All-Star game – in which he led the West to victory after scoring 28 points in 25 minutes.

“(Swinton) is strong, very athletic and he is a winner,” Head Coach Skip Prosser said. “He has gotten better and better in individual improvement.”

After receiving offers from Kansas and Syracuse, among others, Swinton verbally committed to Wake Forest in June 2003, almost two years before he would graduate from high school. His early commitment also prevented several other teams from extending offers to him.

“I visited here and really fell in love with the school,” he said. “The academics here are great, we have top-notch coaches and I really like being able to play with my teammates.”

In reviewing scouting reports of Swinton, who averaged 25 points and 12 rebounds per game at Dudley High School, one word continuously appears in every article: athletic.

“Well hopefully one of the things I can contribute to the team is my athleticism,” he said. “I think that could add a lot on offense and also on defense.”

Swinton should be able to bring some youthful exuberance and athleticism to the Deacons, especially with his post game. With last spring’s graduation of forwards Vyta Danelius and Jamaal Levy, there does seem to be room for playing time for Swinton.

And given his great talent level, one may be led to believe that he could compete with senior Chris Ellis immediately for playing time at the post forward position.

However, despite his early commitment, Swinton still faces many of the same challenges that any freshman – let alone a basketball player – faces.

“I’m still trying to get used to everything here a little bit,” he said. “Having my teammates around really helps a lot, but I’m still trying to find ways to fit in.”

While previous early Wake Forest commits like Chris Paul and Cameron Stanley were able to hang around the team and play some pick-up basketball to get a feel for their teammates and Prosser’s up-tempo style of play, Swinton must also find a niche for himself on a team that appears to already have balanced scoring in Williams and Gray.

Likewise, Prosser must find a spot for an obviously talented player in that same high-scoring offense.

“He has to have a tremendous tenacity around him every time he steps across the line,” Prosser said, “and if that happens he can really help us this year.

“I think he can be a ferocious rebounder, and I think he can be an excellent defender.”

So is everything golden with the prized recruit?

“I think his offense might be a bit behind his ability to rebound and his athleticism,” Prosser said. “But I think that is going to come.”

For Swinton, who has plenty of talent and the backing of his coaches and teammates, production is only a matter of time. And what does he expect from himself?

“I just want to help this team win games and do what I can for the school,” he said. “I just love being at Wake Forest.”
Simply put, Shamaine “Joe” Dukes is a proven winner.

In Cuthbert, Ga., he led his Randolph-Clay High School team to two straight State Championships and a 61-game winning streak in his career. While running the point, he averaged 24 points, 7.7 rebounds, 8.4 assists and 6 steals per game over his career. He committed to Wake Forest over Auburn, Arkansas and other Division-I programs.

“My winning attitude will help out the team a lot, but Wake is already a winning program,” Dukes said. “I will do whatever it takes for us to win. My junior year in high school I passed the ball to set up my teammates and my senior year I stepped up and scored. I am willing to do anything.”

As a point guard, Dukes has big shoes to fill with the loss of former All-American Chris Paul, but he is prepared to step it up. Dukes is known for his ability to slash and penetrate with the ball, which could be a major threat to opposing teams.

“I’m athletic and I have quick first step to get into the lane,” Dukes said. “I’m going to attack and set up my teammates.”

Dukes is an x-factor in the sense that his success along with that of fellow freshman guard Harvey Hale could determine the overall success of the Demon Deacons. How well the two of them will be able to relieve Gray and the rest of the guards from their scoring and defensive duties are questions that only time will be able to answer. However, both are anxious to show fans what they are capable of doing in contributing to a winning team.

“Harvey’s a great player and I’m a great player,” Dukes said. “Harvey is more of a shooting guard and a scorer, whereas I am more of a distributor. I’m going to try and get him open to do whatever it takes to win.”

As an incoming freshman with expectations of stepping in immediately and playing a strong and effective role in a stacked Atlantic Coast Conference, there is extra pressure on Dukes to succeed instantly.

He proved his abilities in high school by dominating virtually every game in which he played, but college is another level of play against grown men. In addition to having to compete against opponents with athletic skills greater than or equal to that of his own, he will face a whole new brand of basketball as applied by D-I coaches.

“In college, more players are stronger, and the speed of the game is not the same,” he said. “In high school, everything was fast-paced with all running. In college, they change up the speed a lot more.”

The knock on him is one that accompanies all freshmen stepping into a significant role: lack of experience. However, Dukes, who played under Hulio Smith with the famed AAU Atlanta Celtics, is used to competing against the best in the country. His title as a freshman undermines his life’s experience with basketball, and he is quick to justify his readiness.

“The older guys told me I’m not a freshman; that’s just my classification,” he said. “I have to be a man … I have to step up to the plate and play. The guys already know I come from a high school that won 61 games straight, so they know I’m doing whatever it takes to win.”

Dukes is a very confident individual, which is a quality asset that he adds to the program. He has proven his ability to lead a team to victory, contributing in any way he possibly can. He is a ferocious competitor who simply refuses to lose.

“I’m very confident,” Dukes said. “I think I can do anything: rebound, score. If you need a bucket, I can get it. If I need to make the extra pass, I will. Whatever it takes.”

Look for Dukes to see plenty of action as the Deacs figure out how well he will be able to adjust to ACC basketball. His success on the court could prove to be the key ingredient to the Demon Deacons winning crucial games in both the regular and post season.
Although Duke was the No. 1 seed going into the NCAA Tournament, they were unable to live up to expectations as they fell to Michigan State 78-68 in the regional semifinals.

This year, however, the team returns stronger than ever. Led by All-American senior J.J. Redick, Duke was unanimously selected as the team that would win the ACC regular season title in voting by the media at the league’s 44th annual Operation Basketball day.

Duke also came out No. 1 in a recent preseason ESPN/USA Today Coaches’ poll, receiving 28 of 31 possible first place votes.

Redick was named the preseason ACC Player of the Year, earning all teammate All-American senior Sheldon Williams.

Last year Redick was named both the ACC Player of the Year and the ACC Tournament MVP. He leads the ACC in scoring (21.8), free throw percentage (.538), minutes played (37.3) and three-point field goals per game (3.7).

Williams was named to the first team All-ACC and the first team ACC All-Tournament last year. He had the most blocks in Duke history (122) and seventh best in ACC history.

He also led the league in rebounding and shot over 58 percent from the floor last season alone.

Duke also returns stars senior Sean Dockery and sophomore DeMarcus Nelson. Dockery injured his knee last season, but is back to 100 percent.

He led the Blue Devils in three-point percentage as a junior, hitting an outstanding 42.9 percent on 56 attempts.

Nelson returns as Duke’s lone sophomore. As a freshman he earned a spot on the All-ACC team.

Perhaps the greatest strength of the Duke team comes from their coach, Mike Krzyzewski, who when the team lost six of their top nine players in 1999 was able to completely restructure his team so that they could have a 15-1 regular season record in the ACC.

Krzyzewski stands as the winningest active coach in the ACC with 721 career wins and has been named Coach of the Year five times.

He was recently selected as the Head Coach for the USA Basketball Men’s Senior National Team program for 2006-2008.

Duke did lose one key player, Shavlik Randolph, to the NBA.

The Blue Devils also graduated former star guard Daniel Ewing.

Fortunately for them, they were able to recruit a strong freshman class comprised of three McDonald’s All-Americans. Among them are Eric Boateng, Josh McRoberts and Greg Paulus and the California player of the year, Jamal Boykin.

Duke hasarguably the strongest recruiting class in the entire nation.

The problem is that most of their team will be comprised of freshmen and seniors.

Last season the Blue Devils were 11-3 in the ACC, with losses to Maryland (twice), Wake Forest, Virginia Tech and North Carolina.

Duke lost to Maryland both at home and on the road, 66-75 and 92-90, respectively.

For whatever reason, the Blue Devils were unable to overcome the Terps even though it wasn’t one of the Terps strongest seasons.

Their non-conference record was 16-1, the one loss being their upset to Michigan State when they were predicted to go all the way.

This year they are yet again predicted to go all the way.

We’ll see if the prediction comes true.

By Caitlin O’Grady
Assistant Sports Editor

In their first season as the 12th member of the ACC, college basketball’s most aggressive conference, the Boston College Eagles look to replicate last year’s success, namely, their 20-game win streak, their 25-5 overall record and fourth ranking in the ACC, the highest in school history.

However, the heat is on the Golden Eagles this year, a stark contrast compared to last year when the team garnered not one vote in any of the preseason polls.

Big East Coach of the Year Al Skinner returns four starters to lead his squad, including All-Big East first-team selections forwards Craig Smith and Jared Dudley.

But also are guard/forward Sean Doornekamp and guard Louis Himant. Smith and Dudley were both pre-season nominees for the Wooden Award as well.

While Smith and Dudley will be significant contributors, the Eagles lack a deep and experienced bench after center Nate Doornekamp and guard Jermaine Watson graduated.

Shot-blocking specialist, center Sean Williams was intended to fill the void left by Doornekamp, but was suspended indefinitely from the team after he was charged with marijuana possession.

If he is reinstated, he probably won’t be able to play until January.

With Williams out, 6-foot-7-inch Smith may be forced to play center in his stead.

Skinner may also experiment with sophomore John Oates in the rotation, who only averaged 2.5 minutes per game.

Williams return to the lineup will be critical, allowing Dudley and Smith to play their more natural positions.

Also without Williams’ ability to erase shots, B.C. will have to adjust their defensive philosophy quite a bit.

Nevertheless, Skinner will attempt to maintain the same up-tempo, pressure defense that has proven successful for the Eagles in the past.

Adding to B.C.’s woes were the losses of guard Steve Hailey and forward Gordon Watt who opted to play basketball elsewhere.

The Eagles will rely on two unproven freshmen, guard Marquez Haynes and shooting guard Tyrese Rice for depth in the backcourt.

The underclassmen must contribute right away to supplement the performances of Dudley and Marshall in order to compete successfully in the Atlantic Coast Conference.

Skinner also needs Marshall to take his play to a higher level in terms of rebounding, defense and intelligence on the floor.

“Whatever it is we need from him, he’s got to do more. I just think Sean has the room for the most growth,” Skinner said in a magazine interview.

Forwards Evan Neisler and Akida McLain (who was also arrested last year on charges of passing counterfeit currency) as well as center Tyrelle Blair are expected to add depth in the frontcourt.

However, as a transfer from another college, Blair will not be able to play the 2005-06 season.

Some polls have ranked B.C. as high as eighth, which may be a little too optimistic for the problem-riddled Eagles.

Their first true test will come during the ACC’s/Big Ten Challenge when they play at No. 5 Michigan State followed by another road game and their first ACC game at No. 21 Maryland.

The Golden Eagles face off against the Deacons Feb. 8 in Winston-Salem, then Feb. 28 in Chestnut Hill.

By Jae Haley
News Editor

In their first season as the 12th member of the ACC, college basketball’s most aggressive conference, the Boston College Eagles look to replicate last year’s success, namely, their 20-game win streak, their 25-5 overall record and fourth ranking in the ACC, the highest in school history.

However, the heat is on the Golden Eagles this year, a stark contrast compared to last year when the team garnered not one vote in any of the preseason polls.

Big East Coach of the Year Al Skinner returns four starters to lead his squad, including All-Big East first-team selections forwards Craig Smith and Jared Dudley.

But also are guard/forward Sean Doornekamp and guard Louis Himant. Smith and Dudley were both pre-season nominees for the Wooden Award as well.

While Smith and Dudley will be significant contributors, the Eagles lack a deep and experienced bench after center Nate Doornekamp and guard Jermaine Watson graduated.

Shot-blocking specialist, center Sean Williams was intended to fill the void left by Doornekamp, but was suspended indefinitely from the team after he was charged with marijuana possession.

If he is reinstated, he probably won’t be able to play until January.

With Williams out, 6-foot-7-inch Smith may be forced to play center in his stead.

Skinner may also experiment with sophomore John Oates in the rotation, who only averaged 2.5 minutes per game.

Williams return to the lineup will be critical, allowing Dudley and Smith to play their more natural positions.

Also without Williams’ ability to erase shots, B.C. will have to adjust their defensive philosophy quite a bit.

Nevertheless, Skinner will attempt to maintain the same up-tempo, pressure defense that has proven successful for the Eagles in the past.

Adding to B.C.’s woes were the losses of guard Steve Hailey and forward Gordon Watt who opted to play basketball elsewhere.

The Eagles will rely on two unproven freshmen, guard Marquez Haynes and shooting guard Tyrese Rice for depth in the backcourt.

The underclassmen must contribute right away to supplement the performances of Dudley and Marshall in order to compete successfully in the Atlantic Coast Conference.

Skinner also needs Marshall to take his play to a higher level in terms of rebounding, defense and intelligence on the floor.

“Whatever it is we need from him, he’s got to do more. I just think Sean has the room for the most growth,” Skinner said in a magazine interview.

Forwards Evan Neisler and Akida McLain (who was also arrested last year on charges of passing counterfeit currency) as well as center Tyrelle Blair are expected to add depth in the frontcourt.

However, as a transfer from another college, Blair will not be able to play the 2005-06 season.

Some polls have ranked B.C. as high as eighth, which may be a little too optimistic for the problem-riddled Eagles.

Their first true test will come during the ACC’s/Big Ten Challenge when they play at No. 5 Michigan State followed by another road game and their first ACC game at No. 21 Maryland.

The Golden Eagles face off against the Deacons Feb. 8 in Winston-Salem, then Feb. 28 in Chestnut Hill.
After a disappointing early exit from the 2005 NCAA Men's Basketball Tournament, the ultimate goal for Deacon Basketball remains the same: bring the program's first National Championship to Winston-Salem.

Entering his fifth year as leader of the program, Head Coach Skip Prosser hopes this is the year, the 100th in Deacon History, that a National Championship will finally be attained. Prosser's task, however, appears to be daunting after the loss of four exceptional seniors and a sophomore who is arguably one of the best players to come through the program, Chris Paul.

Despite the losses, expect Prosser to rise to the challenge and put forth his best performance as head coach yet. Since his arrival, he has consistently guided the Deacs to at least the second round of the NCAA Tournament in each of his four seasons, while averaging 23.5 wins per year. Over the past three seasons, Prosser's team ends up reload rather than rebuilding. His squad typically push the ball up the court with an up-tempo, fast-break approach; yet, regardless of the departure of two skilled point guards, Paul and Taron Downey, Prosser does not intend to change the style of play that has proven to be successful for him.

"I don't think we're going to [change our offensive style], that's been our proclivity over the four years that I've been here and I'd hesitate to say that would change," he said.

Also caused by the departure of Paul and Downey is the uncertainty concerning free-throw shooting, despite the fact that the Deacons set an NCAA record of 50 consecutive free throws last season.

The 2004-05 team had four players shoot 80 percent or higher from the free-throw line but only one of those four remain, senior Justin Gray. With the exception of Gray, only two returning players, seniors Trent Strickland and Eric Williams, attempted more than 25 free throws and only senior Chris Ellis shot higher than 65 percent from the line. The uncertainty and inexperience from the free-throw line will surely present itself during games that go down to the wire and is a major concern for Prosser.

"Paul and Downey down the stretch were automatic, so that is something we are going to have to work on in practice because it is definitely a big concern," he said. "Justin's been a good free throw shooter but guys like Eric and Trent, who have been fair, have got to become good free throw shooters because they are going to be on the floor at the end of games."

An influx of youth and inexperience also awaits Prosser this season, with five freshmen and one transfer to replace the departed Deacons. These freshmen will be expected to have an immediate impact on the team both offensively and defensively and Prosser's coaching ability will certainly have a huge influence on their development and maturation as the season progresses.

He focused on guard play as a crucial position for this year's team, primarily Gray's adaptation to point guard and the emergence of a legitimate shooting guard.

"Most obviously you are going to say that Joe (Shamaine) Dukes and Harvey Hale are going to have to step into some sort of role and I'm confident Justin will do well because there's nothing he hasn't been able to be successful with since being at Wake Forest," Prosser said.

"A good point guard's got to be able to handle the ball, deliver under pressure and shoot the ball well; we know he can shoot the ball, so handling pressure and delivering under pressure are the two things he needs to show he can do."

Although the Deacs lost a significant amount of talent, don't rush to hit the panic button on Prosser's team. He returns two pre-season All-American candidates in Gray and Williams and he still expects to use a game rotation of eight to nine players.

"We may have to be more creative and score in different ways than we did last year because Chris had the ability to get us cheap baskets the way he pushed the ball and Taron could nail us out of a bad possession with a big three, but we are still going to be a very good offensive team," Prosser said.

"Chris was a good defensive player, in particular, and so was Levy but I think we can be a really good rebounding team and I'm hopeful we can improve collectively on defense." Although the Demon Deacons are a different team in 2005-06, change isn't necessarily a bad thing. The Deacs may have little in common with last year's squad beyond the search for their first National Championship, but don't be surprised if Prosser's team ends up reloading rather than rebuilding.
By Alli Soule  
Sports Editor

The defending National Champion UNC Tar Heels are back to ground zero after losing just about every player to the NBA or graduation that got the team yet another banner in the Dean Dome.

The Heels lost their top seven scorers, a group that combined for 81.4 points per game last season, one which included seniors Jackie Manuel, Melvin Scott and Jawad Williams, juniors Sean May, Raymond Felton and Rashad McCants, as well as ACC Freshman of the Year, Marvin Williams.

Yet the team returns with perhaps its most crucial contributor, Head Coach Roy Williams, the winningest active coach in the nation and the fourth-winningest coach in college basketball history.

However, problems are still at hand.

Williams’ senior core of forwards David Noel and Byron Sanders and center Damion Grant did not even average a five points combined last season, in fact Noel leads the way with a scoring average of 3.9 points per game.

The dismal senior class will be aided, however, by newcomer forward Tyler Hansbrough who was named fourth-best in his position in the 2005 recruiting class by rivals.com.

Hansbrough was also highly recruited by Kansas, Kentucky and Missouri, among others. He has been tabbed as the Pre-season ACC Rookie of the Year, and his team has been said to finish sixth in the latest ACC Pre-season Poll. Williams has also brought in four additional freshmen recruits from whom the Heels will need immediate results.

Forward and Winston-Salem native MikeCopeland will join the Tarheels as well 6-foot-5-inch wing Danny Green. In the backcourt, guards Bobby Frasor and 6-foot-5-inch Marcus Ginyard will be there to chip in.

Copeland’s expectations are mainly to be a force in the paint, snatching rebounds and scoring inside.

Green, according to Williams, is quick and apt to poke out loose balls as well as available to float to more than one position.

Ginyard is mainly touted for his defensive capabilities along the perimeter.
By Ryan Durham  
Assistant Sports Editor

After having one of their best seasons in recent memory, Miami will be looking to receive a berth to the NCAA tournament this year. They have been ranked 41st in the nation and No. 7 in the ACC by USA Today/ESPN and have a recruiting class that has been ranked as high as No. 13 in the country.

Head Coach Frank Haith was named the National Association of Basketball Coaches Division 6 Coach of the Year and was a Naismith finalist last year for Miami’s performance in his first season.

They will return four of last year’s starters and 10 letter winners from last years team that advanced into post-season play and managed a 16-13 record. The team only lost three players from last season, the only starter being forward William Frisby, who averaged 8.7 points and 6.4 rebounds a game for the Hurricanes last season.

Leading the Miami attack will be their three returning starters from last season, who combined for 67.5 percent of the team’s points last season. Junior guard Guillermo Diaz is a preseason Wooden Award candidate, senior guard Robert Hite received All-ACC honorable mention honors last season and junior guard Anthony Morrow is the team’s leading scorer after averaging 10.3 points per game last year. Diaz averaged 18.6 points and 4.3 rebounds a game in the ‘Canes run to the NIT. Morrow was inconsistent last season; he will accompany three starters who averaged over 10 points per game last year: Dowdell, Collins and Gordon. Dowdell led the way for the team last year with 14.4 points per game garnering him All-ACC honorable mention last season as a sophomore.

Washington, at 6-foot-7-inches, was named to the ACC All-Freshman team last season after averaging 7.9 points per game last year.

Gordon was also an ACC All-Defensive player last year as a sophomore and brings his tenacity back to the squad. Two seasons ago ESPN basketball analyst Jay Bilas described Tech as one team that made up for its lack of offensive strength with its “grit” and shrewd strategy as provided by Greenberg.

The Hokies will face the Deacons in their ninth conference match Jan. 28 in Winston-Salem.

By Alli Soule  
Sports Editor

Head Coach and ACC Coach of the Year Seth Greenberg returns for his third go-round with the Virginia Tech Hokies, who were chosen to finish eighth in the pre-season conference rankings, despite ending the season tied for fourth place.

Last year, Greenberg’s crew was estimated to end in 10th place in the conference, but not only did he surpass the ratings, he took the Hokies to their first post-season appearance since 1996. The team finished the regular season with a winning record of 15-13 and a .500 season in the ACC.

This season, Greenberg and his Hokies will start the season with some added advantages namely their first six, non-conference games that will be played at home in front of a drastically increased crowd at Cassell Coliseum.

Like last season, the team is pretty young, yet that will not stop them from post-season play again this year.

The team’s probable starting line-up will consist of juniors, forward Markus Sales, center Coleman Collins, guards Zabian Dowdell and Jamon Gordon as well as sophomore forward Deron Washington.

All but Sales are returning starters from the fourth-place Hokie team that surprised so many last year. The 6-foot-5-inch Sales redshirted last season but started his freshman year; he will accompany three starters who averaged over 10 points per game last year: Dowdell, Collins and Gordon. Dowdell led the way for the team last year with 14.4 points per game garnering him All-ACC honorable mention last season as a sophomore.

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By Jae Haley  
News Editor

Only North Carolina suffered more of a talent loss than Georgia Tech. Point guard Jarrett Jack decided to keep his name in the 2005 draft a decision that was up in the air basically minutes before the June, 21 deadline.

Not only did he surpass the ratings, he took the Hokies to their first post-season appearance since 1996. The team finished the regular season with a winning record of 15-13 and a .500 season in the ACC.

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By Alli Soule
Sports Editor

There is one main goal for the Clemson men’s basketball team for the 2005-06 season: an NCAA Tournament berth. Last season, Oliver Purnell’s squad experienced a six-win increase over the previous season. And this season, with the loss of star center Sharrod Ford, the Tigers will have to cope.

Clemson’s offense will shift from focusing on getting the ball to an inside force, to now kicking it out to the perimeter. The team will also play without the senior leadership of forward Olu Babalola, Clemson’s fourth-leading scorer, who also graduated. Nevertheless, Purnell is still optimistic as four starters and 10 lettermen return to the Tiger’s line-up. In terms of senior leadership, forward Akin Akinbogola, center Steve Allen and guard Shawan Robinson are back for Clemson, as is sophomore forward James Mays. Sophomore guard Cliff Hammonds has also proven himself as a vocal leader on the court and will be instrumental in terms of direction and work ethic.

Other members of the sophomore class have Clemson fans excited for basketball season, among them are Mays, forwards Sam Perry and Cheyenne Moore. The four combined to score 814 points last season and the team is depending on them to improve even further.

Although Clemson’s offense will be run differently, Purnell attests to the fact that his team will still be a press and run squad. Robinson was the second-leading scorer last season and currently ranks sixth in career three-point goals and three-point goal percentage in the Clemson books.

Hammonds will also be a threat coming off an impressive year in which he garnered ACC All-Rookie Team honors, honorable mention freshman All-American by various organizations and was a four-time ACC Rookie of the Week.

Redshirt freshman Troy Mathis is also coming in at guard for the Tigers having worked his way into the scout team point guard last season, thus he will join the squad with added experience. He is a strong shooter and excellent ball handler, having scored 73 points in a single game during his junior year of high school alone.

By Alli Soule and Jae Haley
Sports Editor and News Editor

Although Florida State was chosen to finish 11th in the ACC Pre-season Poll, the ‘Noles have shown some spunk the past two years and still have a team with talent.

Gone is sophomore guard Von Wafer to the NBA as well as graduated forwards Adam Wakesowski and Anthony Richardson, but back are starting seniors, guard Todd Galloway, Andrew Wilson, forward Diego Romero and junior forward Alexander Johnson. Perhaps the jewel in the ‘Noles’ line-up is 6-foot-9-inch recruit Uche Echefu, an athletic prospect who will help FSU on the glass. What’s more is Echefu, ranked as the No. 2 center prospect by rivals.com, flat out rejected a starting position on this year’s North Carolina squad, offered by Head Coach Roy Williams. FSU’s Head Coach Leonard Hamilton also landed 6-foot-9-inch recruit Csaasa Breeden for the front court.

Al Thornton is FSU’s highest returning scorer and rebounder and is expected to perform at a high level again this year.

Galloway and sophomore guards Jason Rich and Ralph Mims, former teammates on the Salvation Army Tigers, will attempt to replace the void in the backcourt that was anchored last season by Wafer.

Mims will compete with Galloway for playing time. Perhaps the greatest challenge that Rich and Mims face this season is putting their first-year jitters of playing at the level of superstars like Chris Paul and Raymond Felton behind them.

Defensively, the Seminoles were middle of the pack in scoring defense (70 ppg), but averaged a league-worst 66.6 points in ACC games.

The ‘Noles had difficulty finishing games last season (they lost five ACC games by a total of 10 points) due to immaturity and an overall lack of team chemistry.

The key to FSU’s success this year is finding a cohesive offense, and Mims looks to be the catalyst for it all. If Echefu can establish himself as a strong presence in the paint, he and Mims could prove to be one of the better inside-outside combinations in the ACC.

By Ryan Durham
Assistant Sports Editor

The Cavaliers will look to improve on their 14-15 record from last season and will have to do it without their top two scorers from last season.

They are however returning nine of last year’s lettermen to try and make a run for the ACC Championship, despite their inexperience.

Virginia returns three starters to their lineup this season. Junior guards T.J. Bannister and J.R. Reynolds and sophomore guard Sean Singletary will be looked at to lead the team through the season.

Singletary was an All-ACC Freshman team selection last year after averaging 10.5 points, 3.9 assists and 29.9 minutes played per game. He led the team in assists and steals last season and led all ACC freshmen in these two categories.

Reynolds started 27 of the team’s 29 games last season averaging 10.7 points and 2.5 rebounds per game last season. He also earned second team All-Tournament honors for his 43 points during the ACC tournament last season.

Bannister started 11 games last season for the Cavaliers averaging 4.3 points and 3.7 assists per game.

Adding to Virginia’s attack is sophomore swingman Adrian Joseph, who played in 23 of the Cavaliers’ games last season and was named ACC Rookie of the Week for his performance against Wake Forest where he scored 19 points in 32 minutes.

Virginia is relatively young in their front court with juniors Jason Cain and Donte Minter under the basket. Cain played in 27 of the Cavalier’s games last season but only averaged 2.6 points, and 3.0 rebounds per game.

Minter, due to injury, only played in 18 games last season despite playing all 31 in his freshman season. His freshman season he averaged 5.6 points and 2.6 rebounds a game.

First-year head coach Dave Leitao said that the Cavaliers need to improve their defense and rebounding this season if they want to do better than their 12th place preseason ranking in the ACC.

Virginia starts off their season against Liberty University Nov. 18.
Women's basketball poised for run at ACC title with four returning starters

By Ryan Durham
Assistant Sports Editor

Coming off their first winning year since the 1990-91 season, the women's basketball team is ready to continue last year's success and reach their second post-season berth in a row. They will look to repeat in their 26 regular season games of which the Deacons will play 13 on their home court.

The team will have plenty of talent to lead them to another winning season as well.

Guard/forward and two-time All-ACC selection, senior Liz Strunk as well as guard senior Cotelia Bond-Young, a 2004 All-ACC selection, will be instrumental in terms of leadership.

Moreover, Head Coach Mike Petersen will be there to guide the Deacon's scoring column and into the third round of the Women's NIT, marking the team's first post-season performance in 17 years.

Impressively, he led them to a 17-15 record last season and into the third round of the Women's NIT, marking the team's first post-season performance in 17 years.

"He's just showed so much care for us on and off the court," Jones said. "He's pushing us to our maximum point and things can only get better for us." A lot of pressure will be put on Petersen to try to repeat the Deacons success of last season, but this should be no problem for a coach that has made his career by taking losing teams and turning them into winning programs.

Something he has successfully done with such teams as Texas Christian University, New Mexico State and Gonzaga before coming to Winston-Salem.

With the core of senior leadership as well as Petersen at the helm, the team also has some new secret weapons in store with the addition of five new freshmen: Corinne Groves, Yolanda Lavender, Deirdre Naughton, Sarah Riddle and Alex Tchangoue, with Riddle redshirting this season.

"They're going to have some ups and downs but I think all of them are doing a good job right now," Petersen said. "All of them are capable of helping us this year.

One of the biggest additions is forward Groves, who was the No. 81 top recruit last season by the All-Star Girls report. Another big addition is guard Naughton, who was the No. 33 recruit by the Blue Star Report.

Both players had over 20 minutes of playing time in the team's first exhibition game against Winston-Salem State, and Naughton recorded 19 points and seven boards in the game.

Another addition to the team is guard Lavender who was ranked No. 31 by the Blue Star Report and was an All-American honorable mention in 2005. Also chipping in this year will be guard/forward Tchangoue.

"I think we're capable of a lot of things," Strunk said. "We have a lot of returning players and have a lot of incoming freshmen that are going to help us out a lot. I think we are capable of winning the ACC and all that."

The Deacons are also earning more, tripling their attendance numbers last season from 668 to 2048.

"If (the fans are) there it helps a lot and brings a lot of energy and excitement to the game," Strunk said. "The fans will be a clutch part of Wake Forest's game and will contribute as the sixth man on the court."

"Everybody wants to play in front of fans and just the environment and energy you get from our fans is great," Petersen said. "At the end of the season last year our team was drawing a lot of energy out of our crowd and that's critical."

"It's a lot more fun of a game when we have people cheering for us," Jones said. "It's a great fan base and I think the fans are doing a great job."

This will prove to be an eventful season for the Deacons. With one of the best recruiting classes they have had in recent years and the winning attitude Petersen has brought to the team in just a year, only big things should be expected out of the team despite their underrated, ninth place pre-season ranking in the ACC. Look for them to repeat or even surpass what they accomplished last season.

"We all have one goal, one focus and that's to try and bring any kind of championship," Jones said. "We would like to be the champs of the conference, win the tournament and try to go on further in post season play." And believe it, this year is as good as any for that to happen.
So maybe they aren’t the No. 1 team in the nation, but they are coming off their best season in over a decade. They have players who make ESPN’s Top 10. They have guards who break records. They have what it takes.

In a word they are:

Ready.

Things they did last year

1. Last year, the Demon Deacons women’s basketball team had their first winning season since the 1990-1991 team with a record of 17-15. The Deacs will return nine letter winners including seniors forward/guard Liz Strunk and sharpshooter Cotelia Bond-Young, as well as guard Porsche Jones.

2. The Demon Deacons earned their first post-season berth since the 1987-1988 season when they went 1-1 in the NCAA tournament. They made it all the way to the third round of the Women’s National Invitational Tournament falling to West Virginia, 65-52, on the road, despite a heroic effort after an 11 point halftime deficit.

3. Mike Petersen led the Deacons to their first winning season in over 10 years in just his first season as head coach. Petersen has made his career off turning teams around and has amassed a record of 205-142 in his 12 years of coaching. His philosophy of building off a team’s strengths is key.

4. The coaching staff recruited well last season as the team adds five new players. Among them are freshman forwards Corinne Groves and Alex Tchangoue, guards Yolanda Lavender and Deirdre Naughton, and redshirt freshman center Sarah Riddle.

5. Thanks to the efforts of Petersen, attendance at women’s basketball games increased three-fold. Petersen went so far as to sit with the Screamin’ Demons during a men’s game to encourage people to come to his games.

Things they’ll do this year

1. This season, the Deacons have the wherewithall to make it to the NCAA Tournament. Last year they got a taste of post-season play and maxed it to it’s full potential going three rounds deep into the WNIT. Handily beating South Florida and Charlotte, the team is focused and driven and has the potential to go farther.

2. Strunk has the potential to break out this year. She has been named to the Second Team All-ACC two years running and now it’s time for an upgrade. The guard-forward put up a school record 40 points last year in the Deacs’ Feb. 21 meeting with Clemson. She is the team’s second-leading scorer and pulls down 5.9 boards per game.

3. The team made leaps and strides last year, however, their conference record was somewhat rocky and one that could improve from 3-11. The Deacs can finish this year with a .500 season, however, this task is difficult, considering four ACC teams rank in the Top 25 of the USA Today/ESPN Poll.

4. This could be the year of the freshmen for the Deacs and a chance for ACC All-Freshmen Team honors. Keep in mind that three of the Deacons’ new recruits, Naughton, Groves and Lavender, were in the Top 100 in the Blue Star Recruiting report.

5. This year, the Deacons will have more of an inside presence with the emergence of sophomore Melissa Watson who was a medical redshirt and also, starting senior center Kelia Evans will not be burdened by an ankle injury.
By Alli Soule  

Sports Editor

The entire Wake Forest fan base breathed a collective sigh of relief when senior center All-American candidate Eric Williams opted to keep his name out in the 2005 NBA Draft. And they had good reason. The big kid out of Wake Forest, N.C., who can’t get enough of Japanese anime, drawing and classical music has become a campus staple and a crowd favorite, saluting his mom, who makes it to every home game, after just about every play he makes.

Those are a lot of salutations.

Last season was without a doubt his break-out year. He averaged 16.2 points, 7.7 rebounds per game and unbelievably, the 6-foot-9-inch postman had more steals than blocked shots, pick-pocketing his opponents 39 times to 36 blocks. Impressively, Williams did all this while maintaining the third-highest field goal percentage in the nation and highest in the cutthroat Atlantic Coast Conference with .630.

Yet Williams, with his trademark relaxed, happy-go-lucky nature is prepared for a successful season even if it isn’t as profitable as the last.

“If I don’t have the year that I had last year so be it, it was my decision, it was my choice (to stay at Wake Forest),” he said. “I’ll find another route to get to my main goal which is to get to the NBA.”

The 2004-2005 season was also a year of accomplishment for Williams. It won him the attention of numerous NBA scouts who offered valuable advice for his transition into the big leagues, most of which had to do with improving his jump shot as well as facing up to the basket rather than playing with his back to it.

“I still got a lot of feedback from a lot of scouts,” he said. “It’s a process that can really help you if you’re willing to soak it in.”

Williams’ other vices have slowly faded throughout his career. Plagued in his early years with frustrating foul trouble, he only fouled out twice last year. Also, the accolades began to follow his brilliant, dominating performances earning him Honorable Mention for All-American honors, Second Team All-ACC, USBWA All-District Team and ACC Player of the Week honors.

Williams has perfected his technique in the paint with post moves, drop steps and sheer brute strength that can shake off up to three defenders. But this type of physical play is nothing new to a player who goes by Atlas, the god who carried the world on his back.

“I’m a major fan of Greek mythology,” he said. “I’m not saying that I hold the world on my back, but he represents a lot of things that I want to be,” he laughed.

And it’s doubtless that Williams will carry this team on his back as it’s most consistent go-to guy and arguably the best Post player in the nation.

In both games against Duke last season, center Sheldon Williams and Big E were neck-in-neck in numbers. In the Deacs’ 92-89 win at home Feb. 2, Big E racked in 19 points to Williams’ 16 and at the Feb. 20 game in Cameron Indoor Stadium, Eric managed 10 points to Sheldon’s 12.

Williams also pulled down 11 offensive rebounds in the Feb. 2 game against Duke, a school, single-game record, then he grabbed 11 defensive boards at Virginia Tech three days later marking the most of any player on the team all season.

Yet there is one aspect of his game that is yet to be added to his repertoire.

“Yes. I do plan on taking one (three-pointer) this year,” Williams said. “It’s probably going to be at the end of a game when coach is about to take me out.”

Among other changes, Williams will have to adjust to the new play of his shaken-up offense. Moreover, he’ll be sharing time with junior forward/center Kyle Visser who seems to work well running a high/low offensive with Williams as seen in pre-season play this season.

“The kind of back-up I have for my position is much more complete,” Williams said. “Kyle knows what he must do to stay on the floor. Chris (Ellis) is coming back from a foot injury and is looking really good.”

So maybe Williams won’t be the only big man on the court this year, but he’ll certainly be one of the most valuable.

“I felt I have a lot of unfinished business with this school and this program as well as my teammates,” Williams said. “We’ve been through a lot together. It felt right to come back at this time.”
By Caitlin O'Grady
Assistant Sports Editor

After last year’s disappointing loss to West Virginia in the second round of the NCAA Tournament, the campus was abuzz with rumors about which players would turn pro. Eric Williams declared his intentions to possibly enter the draft and Chris Paul said he would be entering the draft.

Despite the fact that many pondered his jump too, Justin Gray did not. But it wasn’t that he couldn’t. Gray, an All-American last year, is currently the owner of 1,343 career points, putting him 20th on Wake Forest’s all-time career scoring list.

Not only that, but he spent this past summer playing with the USA U-21 Men’s World Championship Team, an experience that marks the third time in which Gray has played international basketball.

“It was fun going to Argentina and playing with USA on your chest and seeing the flag raised,” Gray said. “After seeing what the Olympic team did we wanted to win every game. That wasn’t the case with us, but we brought one gold medal back.”

In competing as part of the U.S. Team, Gray earned Co-MVP honors at the Global Games. The honor was given to him over J.J. Reddick, Terrence Roberts and Curtis Withers, all of whom were named to the All-Tournament Team.

Gray also received the honor of being named to the Wooden Award Preseason List alongside Williams. The Wooden Award is given annually to the nation’s top basketball player. Currently, there are only 50 candidates on the list.

“It’s always a good feeling to be known as one of the top-50 players. Hopefully, I can be on it at the end of the year,” Gray said.

These days Gray’s popularity seems to extend beyond the basketball court. Recently the student body named him Homecoming King, an accolade that he was more than happy to accept.

“It’s an honor to know that people around campus like me,” Gray said. “I like everybody else. It’s a good feeling.”

All the same, however, the same student body is expecting a lot from him on the court this season.

With Paul’s decision to join the NBA, Gray will have to step into the role as point guard and relinquish his former role of shooting guard. And to Gray, he does not see this change as an issue, but rather as an opportunity.

“I was recruited to play point guard. I think the best thing for the team at the time was for me to play shooting guard,” he said. “I still have the skills in my back pocket, I just have to bring them out.”

When it comes to the impending season, though, he has no doubts about the capabilities of his teammates. He wants this year’s team to surpass last year’s successes and avoid their pitfalls.

“(I want to) win as many games as I can and get past the Sweet Sixteen,” Gray said “I've been there and I want to get a little bit further.”

However, according to Gray, the team will be facing an uphill battle because of the many new faces on the roster. Nonetheless, he has confidence in himself and the other senior members of the basketball team to lead the freshmen in the right direction.

“We have four freshmen and Cameron Stanley who’s just like a freshman because he redshirted last year,” Gray said. “I think we as a senior group can lead everybody in the right direction.”

One would imagine that with such high hopes for a great season, Gray would be looking forward to a big game against a rival ACC opponent. Such is not the case.

Instead, Gray cited the game he is most looking forward to this season as none other than the first exhibition game of the season against Winston-Salem State, one in which the Deacs took home an 88-84 victory.

“I have family that’s on that team and its bragging rights for me,” he said. “We’re playing for the city rights and it’s the first game so by that time I’ll be ready to play against anybody,” Gray said in an earlier interview.

Aside from WSSU, however, Gray’s fondest memories from last season were the wins against Duke, N.C. State and Chapel Hill.

“Anytime you beat them you feel like you can walk around anywhere in North Carolina with your head up. Especially Carolina because they won the National Championship.”

Nevertheless, it will be heavy upon Gray’s shoulders, whether this team will be able to walk tall amongst their competition during regular and post-season games.
One aspect that defines all college sports, basketball in particular, is the high turnover rate of athletes. Every year, college basketball teams lose key players to graduation and the draft. And with the departure of several key members of the team, the 2005-2006 Demon Deacons will be no exception.

After losing players, a team’s first step is to begin rebuilding and finding out who will take on the vacant leadership roles. At the recent ACC Media Day, Head Coach Skip Prosser was asked several questions about who will lead his talented group of athletes into a cohesive team. The first name mentioned was Trent Strickland, Wake Forest’s charismatic senior.

Strickland also fielded several questions about the need for him to take on a leadership role. “I’ve got freshman and sophomores looking up to me and expecting me to lead and be composed on the floor. I think that is my challenge, but the only way I can answer is to prove myself when I’m tested.”

Strickland is known for his emotional playing style which has contributed to his reputation as a spark off the bench. Strickland has 47 career dunks in three years of part-time play. However, his emotions have also been blamed by critics for many of his penalties and aggressive mistakes. In response to these doubts, Strickland said, “I think my emotion will help the team. We will just have to wait and see. I am a stubborn person and like the way I am.”

The people that know Strickland like the way he is, too. During his summer vacation, Strickland traveled to East Asia where he participated in a Christian organization called “Athletes in Action.” He played basketball with other college and former college stars while helping underprivileged people and sharing his faith with them. “I realized that I am fortunate to be where I am. I am grateful to God for that. Going to East Asia was a big culture shock. I saw how hard those people work for so little. I just feel lucky to be playing basketball and feel blessed for my opportunities,” Strickland said.

Already showing the signs of a leader, Strickland spoke little of himself and was more interested in talking about his team’s status and the teammates he is proud of. His team is ranked as high as sixth in one preseason poll while dropping to as low as 22 in another.

“I don’t even look at the rankings now. I was taught talk is cheap. It’s not where you start but where you finish.”

Strickland then discussed what the team’s strengths were and what he felt they would need to improve upon throughout the season. “We play well together and don’t get all caught up in who does what. We all just want to win and that will go a long way. We also have the biggest big men in the ACC. We will be trying to use them to our advantage.”

“I can’t really tell what our weaknesses are but people automatically say our defense just because that has been a problem in the past. So I guess we will work harder on our defense,” Strickland said.

With so much focus on Wake Forest’s departing players, many have forgotten to take a look at the four impressive freshmen that the Demon Deacons recruited in 2005.

Coach Prosser and the rest of the men’s basketball team had encouraging things to say about the newest additions to the team.

“I’m very impressed. It is a hard transition from high school ball to college but after a few practices I can see them working hard and improving. They will help us right away,” Strickland said.

The performance of the freshman class will be crucial to the team’s success, especially within the perennially powerful Atlantic Coast Conference.

“Think it’s still tough. Miami is coming up, UNC and Duke are always there, and we are playing a good Boston College team this year. It will be an all out battle,” Strickland said.

When asked what games he is looking forward to the most, Strickland could not hold back a big smile. “You always look forward to the Duke game from the past battles we’ve had. Personally, I like Clemson because that’s where everyone is from back home so you know I want to go down and beat them.”

Talking about big games may have made Strickland smile, but when the topic of his famous dunks came up, he had to laugh. “I hope it’s a show but I don’t want to spoil it by spilling the beans for you. You just have to come out and enjoy it with us.”

More than 14,000 of college basketball’s craziest fans will be packing the Lawrence Joel Veterans Memorial Coliseum to enjoy the show, and many eyes will be on Wake Forest’s charismatic senior leader, Trent Strickland.
By Curtis Shank
Old Gold & Black Reporter

Quiet and subdued are not adjectives associated with senior forward Chris Ellis. He is a fixture on campus—yelling, cracking jokes and laughing, with his 6-foot-9 frame visible from just about every spot on the Magnolia Quad.

But during basketball media day Oct. 12, Ellis was all business.

“Last year reminded me of my high school days. It was the time of my life,” Ellis said. “But after the (NCAA) Tournament loss, and Chris [Paul] leaving, I’m much more focused on winning this year.”

The game Ellis is referring to, the 111-105 double overtime loss to West Virginia in the second round of the tournament, was one in which he was not much of a factor, scoring just three points and grabbing four rebounds in only 11 minutes of playing time.

As a senior, Ellis must be hoping to have more of an impact this year although he does not say that outright.

“I just want to do whatever it takes to help the team,” he said. “Anything I can contribute will be great.”

Ellis is emerging from an off-season in which he had surgery to fix a stress fracture on his left ankle.

“It was just a small simple procedure, but it kept me out of a lot of practice so far,” he said. “I’ve been conditioning on a stationary bike since the injury to keep his endurance up. He returned to practice nearly three weeks ago but still wears a plastic brace around the healing ankle. Nevertheless, getting back to full speed is the most important thing right now.

“With Chris leaving people might think we’ll slow down our tempo a little bit,” Ellis said. “But we’ll still run up and down the court. Coach tells us to be ready to push the ball all game and I think we’ll be as fast as ever.”

Still, any time he was questioned on his predictions on the season, Ellis returned to the West Virginia game.

“That game put a fire back in us,” he said. “We know this year that we need to play defense to win. But as far as how I think we’ll be at the end of the season, I can’t comment. My mind is focused only on Nov. 3.”

That was the date of the Deacons’ first exhibition game at the Joel against Winston-Salem State in which Ellis chipped in four points and three rebounds in 15 minutes during the Deacon victory 88-84. The Deacons were favored to win that game handily, but all the same, expectations for the rest of the season are not as high as last year.

“It’s like my freshman year when nobody expected anything out of us,” Ellis said.

“There’s not a lot of pressure so we should be able to just go out and play.”

That does not mean that Ellis feels that the Deacons’ No.18 pre-season ranking is warranted, however.

“I think we have some guys that will surprise a lot of people this year,” he said. “Guys like Trent (Strickland), Cam (Stanley) and (Kyle) Visser have room to jump into the spotlight without Chris Paul around.”

And Ellis also may have room to jump into the spotlight as well.

Son of former NBA player Dale Ellis, who was arguably one the premier three point shooters in the history of the league, Ellis shares his father’s touch.

Ellis made 11 threes last year, but that does not mean he will start jacking up shots left and right.

“I don’t think that’s my role on this team,” he said. “I may take some when I’m left wide open, but don’t expect me to lead the team or anything.”

More likely, Ellis hopes to be a force inside to complement senior center Eric Williams.

Besides rehabbing his foot, Ellis has spent the off season working on new offensive moves around the basket.

“The coaches have helped me on my post moves, and I think I’ll be much better in that area this year,” he said.

But most importantly, Ellis hopes to stay healthy for an entire year, something he has not done since his freshman year.

“I consider myself a vocal leader on and off the court,” he said. “But I definitely prefer it when I can be on the court and everything I’ve been doing this off-season worked toward that goal.”

Whatever Ellis does on the court, you can be sure that he’ll be vocal somewhere.
Buck knows that his years as a basketball player will serve him well. “Being a part of this basketball program for four years has shown that I can be committed to something,” he said. “Wake Forest basketball has been something that people know and are proud of, and the time I have spent here has given me a great opportunity.”

Buck will leave Wake Forest with once-in-a-lifetime memories. He has played at Duke in Cameron Indoor Stadium, an experience he can only classify as surreal. He has also won an ACC regular-season Championship. He has played the North Carolina Tar Heels twice, and participated in the Deacons’ thrilling triple-overtime victory two years ago.

However, one of his favorite memories comes from a practice during freshmen year. “Josh Howard and I were on a two-on-one fast break in practice. Josh threw a bad pass to me and after he came over and apologized to me for the bad pass.”

This year Buck changed his number from 44 to 10.

By Jimmy McQuilkin
Old Gold & Black Reporter

For every home game, the Texas A&M football team dresses one student walk-on as the game’s “12th Man.” The “12th Man” represents the student body on the field and plays on the Aggie kickoff team. Here at Wake Forest, we may not have the same Aggie tradition, but during basketball season, the student body has its own “12th Man,” its own representative on the court, and his name is John Buck.

As a walk-on, students from Wake Forest see the senior forward as one of their own, a player that is not out of their stratosphere athletically like some of the other members of the basketball team. Nevertheless Buck is a crowd favorite and by the closing minutes of a blow-out game, it’s not uncommon for the crowd to start chanting his name, imploring Head Coach Skip Prosser to give him some well-deserved playing time.

And in return, Buck appreciates his special bond with the student body. “Students can relate to me more,” he said. “When I can hear my name chanted at the end of the games, I know that it signifies our victory.”

While fans only see Buck’s small amount of time on the court during games, the countless hours of practice and preparation time that Buck sacrifices for the team are his greatest contributions to the group. As a member of the practice squad, Buck maintains that practices are his games. And he approaches every one with same intensity and enthusiasm in order to prepare his teammates for the same atmosphere at games.

Buck and other practice squad members imitate opposing players during practice in order to prepare his teammates for the playing styles of their opponents. “I get to be different players each game, so one day I’ll be Shavlik Randolph and another day I could be Chris Bosh,” Buck said. “It’s kind of fun to be shooting threes one day, then staying in the post on another.”

As his playing days wind down, Buck has begun to think about how he will spend his time after graduation. He aspires to teach and coach at his old high school, Long Island Lutheran, in New York. Whether he chooses to become a high school coach or decides to follow another path, All the same, there he is, an All-American, apologizing to a freshman walk-on for a bad pass in a drill. It just shows his character and the character of players I’ve been able to play with over the years,” he said.

Buck’s most prized memory, and a play that all true Deacon fans will remember forever, came on Feb. 27 of last season against Virginia. Buck scored his only field goal of the year in the game, but he made it count.

“T"o see their reactions and to see them be so happy for me really sums up why I do this. To be part of a team, to be close to the guys and to see them that happy for me just makes all the long hours and the practices worthwhile.”

This year Buck changed his number from 44 to 10.
By Ryan Durham
Assistant Sports Editor

Towering over most of his teammates at 6-foot-11-inches, junior center Kyle Visser helps to add a lot of depth and height to a strong Deacon lineup this season. Visser has been a potent force off the bench for the last two seasons and played in 33 of the Deacons’ games in their trek to the tournament last year.

Though he is a big man in one of the toughest conferences in NCAA basketball, Visser has not forgotten his beginnings in Grand Rapids, Mich. as the youngest of four children.

His parents are still the people that he admires the most and he said that they are the best anyone could ask for. The only player that lives farther from the Wake Forest campus is freshman guard Harvey Hale, but the Vissers make the long trip from Visser’s hometown multiple times a year.

“I just try and play my game when my parents come,” Visser said. “Luckily they have gotten to see some of my best games, which is awesome. I love seeing them up in the stands.”

The Vissers did not raise a fool either, their son has made the Dean’s list for the last four semesters and in a vote among his teammates was elected most likely to have a 4.0 GPA this year and the player that studies the most.

Visser has not just hit the books this off season though. He has also been in the gym working on getting stronger this year.

“I’ve worked on my lower body strength,” Visser said. “I don’t know if you can see a difference in my upper body by my lower body is much stronger which helps me down low.”

He also said that he has also worked on his outside shooting a lot. Despite his supportive home, Visser has started to love the south and his life at Wake Forest.

“I love it down south and truthfully could see myself down here for the duration of my life,” he said, “but we’ll see where basketball and life takes me.”

So far, basketball has taken Visser a very long way from home—especially this summer. He spent time working on his game while traveling with the Athletes in Action Tour in East Asia, where he played in six games alongside senior swingman Trent Strickland.

Visser averaged 11.3 points per game and had a high of 17 points in one, but it was not the play but the humanitarian aspect of the tour that he enjoyed the most.

“(My best experience was) probably being able to reach out to culture that I probably won’t ever be able to encounter again,” he said. “It was just completely different.”

All of these points will help to make “Viss” a much more versatile player this season, which is a good thing. Last season he did not get as much playing time as was expected at the beginning of the season but with the absence of two big presences from last year (in Vytas Danelius and Jamaal Levy), he will probably expect more play time this year.

He is also likely to see time with senior center Eric Williams at the four and five spots.

“With the past you haven’t seen Eric and I playing a lot together and hopefully with me at the four and Eric at the five, this year we will get some extended playing time,” he said.

Despite the loss of Chris Paul, Taron Downey, Danelius and Levy, Visser has no doubts about the Deacon’s success this season.

“It’s definitely a different team, but I think we’re just as talented and just as good,” Visser said. “I’m looking for bigger and better things than past years.”

This year he says that he wants to beat Duke at Cameron Indoor and also that he wants to finish on a high note for the outgoing class.

“I want to have a good season for these seniors because they have done so much for this program and really turned it around,” Visser said. “This place is just a whole different Wake Forest atmosphere because of them.”

Hopefully Visser and the Deacons will be able to accomplish all of this and more during the season. He is now a leader on this team and will certainly be a leader on the court.
Mike Drum
#34

By Graham Hall
Old Gold & Black Reporter

He might not be flashy, he might not be a dunker, he might not be AND1 quality, but this upcoming spring junior forward Mike Drum might be the most valuable sixth man in the ACC.

Drum, a Presbyterian College transfer in 2004, was forced to sit out last season due to NCAA rules regarding student-athlete transfers. While he was not eligible to play in any games, he was able to participate in team practices, gaining valuable experiences practicing with Wake Forest's talented starters. Drum's importance to the Deacons this season might have been overlooked, as current starters Justin Gray and Eric Williams have received national attention, but the lack of credit plays to Drum's favor. The North Carolina born forward with his 6-foot-6-inch frame might appear like the pro-typical small forward, but nothing about Drum is typical.

He has the ability to rebound and provide a solid force in the paint, but his true skills resemble those of a guard. Drum has an excellent shot and also the ability to put the ball on the floor to beat out other players with the dribble. Drum, along with other great players, posses an outstanding shot from behind the arch.

He will use other team's false assumptions about his appearance to his advantage. While players on opposing teams will tend to play as a forward, his guard-like abilities will allow him to have open three-point shots.

"This past summer I really worked on dribbling and my shot," he said.
Yet he anticipates his role as one that will be primarily to come off the bench for the Deacons this season.

"Pretty much I expect to do whatever I can to help this team," Drum said. "Whether they want me to come in and rebound or shot the three. I feel confident with the game plan, Prosser's game plan is the best and we are going to follow it to the best of our ability."

While Drum may fill more of a sixth man role, his expectations are not those of most substitute players. Drum who sees his game as being similar to Wally Szczerbiak, and who modeled his role after that of a younger Steve Kerr is not afraid of being under pressure.

"Every player wants the game winning shot, so of course I want to have it," he said.
The fact that Drum had to sit out last season should not hurt his overall play when it comes time for ACC competition.

Before transferring to Wake Forest in 2004, he lead the Presbyterian Blue Hose's in scoring with an average of 11.9 points per game during the 2003-2004 season. His performance as a sophomore lead the team to a 16-12 record. As a freshman he started every game but one, and averaged 11 points a contest.

"I gained a lot of confidence and knowledge of the game," Drum said of his experience at Presbyterian College. "I really matured and I now understand the work ethic you have to have to play. I learned what I have to work on to become a better player."

After his sophomore year, Drum decided to transfer to Wake Forest for academic and athletic reasons. For many, transferring schools is a difficult task, but Drum adjusted quite well.

"Presbyterian is a lot like a smaller version of Wake," Drum said. "Both schools have campuses that look great."

Drum, who grew up watching Tim Duncan and Randolph Childress, was impressed by Wake Forest's national academic rank as well as that of the basketball team. Academics have always been as important as basketball for Drum, who in high school graduated with a perfect 4.0 GPA and was a member of the National Honor Society.

The 2005-06 season is full of difficult challenges and high expectations for Drum and the Demon Deacons. The team is predicted to finish third in the ACC and will have to contend with a powerful Duke team that was a unanimous selection to finish first.

While Drum has said that beating North Carolina last season was his most memorable moment at Wake Forest, a win this season at home over Duke would more memorable as Drum will finally be able to square off with the hated Blue Devil rivals.