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Mens Schedule

11/17/2004	BCA INVITATIONAL
11/18/2004	BCA INVITATIONAL
11/19/2004	BCA INVITATIONAL
11/26/2004	CAMPBELL
11/29/2004	PURDUE
12/05/2004	MANHATTAN
12/11/2004	LIBERTY (@ REYNOLDS)
12/15/2004	LOUISIANA-LAFAYETTE
12/19/2004	WASHINGTON
12/21/2004	BYU
12/28/2004	COLUMBIA
12/30/2004	TBA
01/02/2005	WEST VIRGINIA
01/09/2005	MIAMI
01/13/2005	DUKE
01/16/2005	GEORGIA TECH
01/19/2005	VIRGINIA TECH
01/23/2005	MARYLAND
01/26/2005	FLORIDA ST.
01/29/2005	CLEMSON
02/03/2005	NORTH CAROLINA
02/05/2005	VIRGINIA
02/10/2005	WAKE FOREST
02/13/2005	GEORGIA TECH
02/16/2005	MARYLAND
02/22/2005	NORTH CAROLINA
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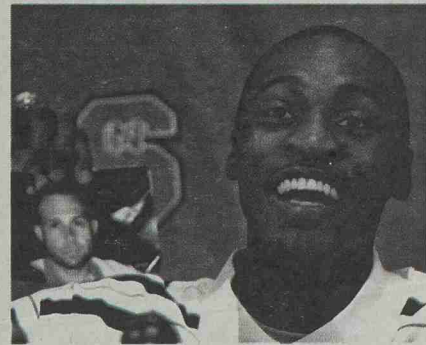
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COVER Julius Hodge being interviewed by television reporters at NCSU's Media Day in mid-October.

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© 2004 Technician / NCSU SMA
323 Witherspoon Student Center
Raleigh NC, 27695
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AROUND THE

Miami

Jan. 9, Coral Gables, Fla.

Background Miami begins its inaugural ACC season with new addition Coach Frank Haith, a Burlington native. The Hurricanes will be limited in their size and backcourt depth, relying on Hite and Diaz to perform to conference standards.

Key Players Guard Robert Hite (15.2 PPG, 3.6 RPG), Guard Guillermo Diaz (11.8 PPG, 2.9 RBG)

Quote "It's not as bad as I was told it [the talent level] was going to be, or as I thought it would be." —Coach Frank Haith

Duke

Jan. 13, Raleigh

Background Coach Mike Krzyzewski returns for his 25th season of coaching to a team stricken by losses to the NBA. Pursuit of the conference title relies on keeping the Blue Devils two big forwards, Sheldon Williams and Shavlik Randolph, out of foul trouble.

Key Players Guard J.J. Redick (15.9 PPG, 3.1 RPG), Forward Sheldon Williams (12.6 PPG, 8.5 RPG), Guard Daniel Ewing (12.6 PPG, 2.6 RPG)

Quote "We have to make sure to stay healthy and out of foul trouble. There won't be any wasting of fouls. I'll be an environmentalist in terms of fouls." —Coach Mike Krzyzewski

Georgia Tech

Jan. 16, Raleigh

Feb. 13, Atlanta, Ga.

Background The Jackets post four starters, four veterans and four promising freshmen to add a great depth and talent to a team that vaulted from unranked to exceptional last season. With the devel-

opment of team chemistry, Tech should be able to sustain or even surpass the level of success it achieved last year.

Key Players Guard B.J. Eldey (14.9 PPG, 2.8 RPG), Guard Jarrett Jack (12.5 PPG, 4.9 RPG), Guard Will Bynum (9.6 PPG, 2.2 RPG)

Quote "I like the leadership on this team. Last year's team was such a close team and the guys coming back remember how much more enjoyable last year was as opposed to a few years ago when we were going through some growing pains." —Coach Paul Hewitt

Virginia Tech

Jan. 19, Blacksburg, Va., Feb. 26, Raleigh

Background The Hokies will join the ACC with a roster complete with a talented freshman class and backcourt depth. However, a lackluster frontcourt and the loss of Bryant Matthews has Coach Seth Greenburg introducing a lineup which likely plays four guards at a time.

Key Players Guard Carlos Dixon (13.8 PPG, 3.2 RPG), Guard Zabian Dowdell (10.8 PPG, 3.0 RPG), Guard James Gordon (9.8 PPG, 4.4 RPG)

Quote "If you can't make plays in this conference, if you can't drive the ball, if you can't handle pressure, if you can't handle quick, athletic, attacking teams, you're in trouble. You need a good guard play. You need to be able to pass and catch the ball. We're definitely guard-heavy right now." —Coach Seth Greenburg

Maryland

Jan. 23, College Park, Md., Feb. 16, Raleigh

Background The deep, talented Terrapins reminded everyone last season they were still a force and Gary Williams could still coach. As the tournament leaves Tobacco Road headed for Washington D.C., Maryland may have an advantage with four returning starters but will still have to work on defense and passing for another

successful season.

Key Players Guard John Gilchrist (15.4 PPG, 4.5 RPG), Forward Nik Caner Medley (12.2 PPG, 4.7 RPG), Guard Chris McCray (11.0 PPG, 3.8 RBG)

Quote "I have to make the players understand just because we achieved something at the end of last year, we have to keep the momentum going. If we stay where we are, teams will pass us because they're getting better." —Coach Gary Williams

Florida State

Jan. 26, Raleigh

Background Florida State suffers more serious graduation losses this year than the six conference teams finishing ahead of the Seminoles last season. Without the experience of Tim Pickett, Nate Johnson and Michael Joiner, Coach Leonard Hamilton will be forced to work for less than a temporary step back this season.

Key Players Forward Alexander Johnson (9.5 PPG, 4.2 RPG), Guard Von Wafer (7.9 PPG, 1.9 RPG)

Quote "The talent in the system is so much beyond where it was when we began. The only question is whether our returning players can help shorten the learning curve of our newcomers and allow that talent to flourish." —Coach Leonard Hamilton

Clemson

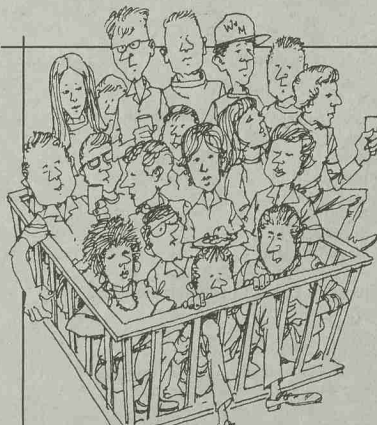
Jan. 29, Clemson, S.C.

Background Coach Oliver Purnell continues to upgrade Clemson talent, focusing on positioning defensive footing for the upcoming years. The Tigers will rely on Ford's blocking and Balalola's guarding to provide an effective foundation this season.

Key Players Forward Sharrod Ford (11.9 PPG, 7.2 RPG), Guard Sha

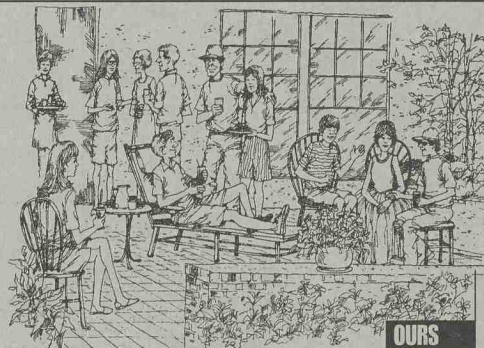
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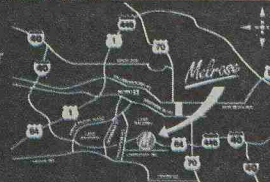


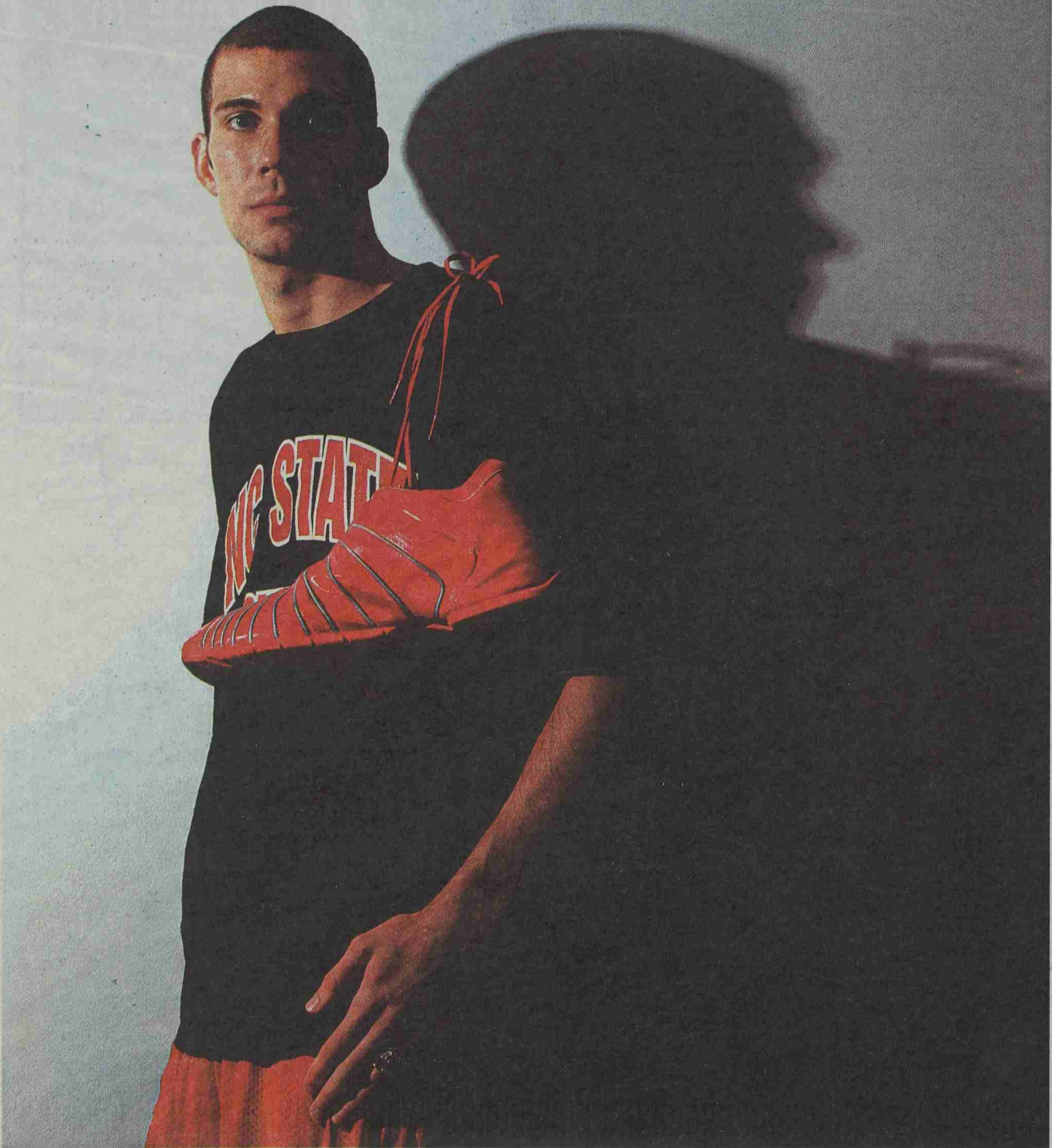
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Chris McCoy spent his freshman year as a basketball walk-on. Now that he's 'walked-off,' he tells his story

A baller's life

Ever since I was little I dreamed of playing college basketball. I developed a respect and hatred for Duke while watching Christian Laettner sink the Kentucky Wildcats. That was my first March in Kentucky basketball country.

I was hooked.

I would watch any game that was on the tube, especially the Kansas Jayhawks. My mom went to Kansas and I shed more than a few tears as I watched their annual choke job come March. I dreamt that one day I could finally have my "One Shining Moment."

Coming out of high school I was being heavily recruited by Vanderbilt, talked to Xavier and the University of Dayton had given me some letters...to run cross-country. But my dream was not to just run, but to run the Princeton backdoor.

I finally settled on a college, N.C. State, and had my high school coach send a letter and some film to the staff here. They told me I could try out and we kept in touch all summer. I eagerly anticipated August and the chance at my dream.

Nervous could not describe the feeling I had when I first stepped on the court. Difficult could not describe the first workouts I was put through. Intimidated is not the right word to describe how I felt on the court.

When picture day rolled by, I had still not officially made the team. They asked me to be in half the pictures, in case I did not make the team. So wearing former player Justin Flatt's old No. 10, I was awkwardly introduced to the team. Before my future teammates knew my name, I was "J Flatt."

Soon after picture day I became an official member of the team. Next step: weight room. My first day with the whole team, I dropped a 45-pound weight from above my head onto the floor. The team laughed. I was mortified.

My first day of practice, I was eager to prove myself. I tripped over my own feet with no one near me. The team laughed. I was mortified.

When you are a walk-on on the second best team in the ACC you learn how to laugh things off.

You learn that trying to guard Julius Hodge one-on-one is not a good idea. You learn that blocking Marcus Melvin out is almost impossible. You learn that Cameron Bennerman can jump a lot higher than you think he can — as he dunks on you.

What you come to realize is that these players are all on scholarship at a top-25 school for a reason. You also realize that there is a reason you weren't recruited to play at this level. I took my lumps and was humbled, but I succeeded just enough in practice and pick-up games to earn respect from some of the best players in the nation.

People talk about how many privileges basketball players get. We get shoes, clothes, gifts, food and free tutors. This is very true.

We also get priority scheduling, you cannot forget that. Too bad it is to make sure we get all the 8 a.m. classes so we don't mix practice.

With the good there is the bad.

The sacrifices are much greater than I could have ever imagined. You have to realize you are going to be tired all day, every day. Forget Thanksgiving, Christmas or spring breaks.

Christmas dinner was post-practice Waffle House.

An average day saw me go to my classes, eat lunch and then lift weights. Next was practice and dinner. After dinner was homework time. By this time it was 8 or 9 p.m. I would be a waste with no energy until I finally went to sleep.

As nervous as I was about playing against these guys, I was more nervous about interacting with them. The season was coming right off the Baylor fiasco, which left a player dead and another charged with his death.

You always heard about the scandals and the suspensions. What you do not hear enough about is how great of guys we have here.

On the road, we all had roommates. My roommates? Usually Julius Hodge or Marcus Melvin, last year's senior star. Why did they choose the walk-on freshman to room with the stars of the team? I have no clue.

All I know is that Marcus never stops talking and never stops smiling. More important, he never stops making you laugh. My favorite memory of Marcus is getting ready for the game in our hotel room watching Pepe le Pew cartoons. He was like a little kid and his joy for life was amazing.

Here is a little secret about Julius Hodge: he loves "Lord of the Rings." He once brought his Xbox on a trip so he could play the "LOTR" video game the night before a game. He is also a clown and gets away with teasing Coach Herb Sendek more than anyone else.

Speaking of Coach Sendek, you will not find a more honest and straight-shooting coach in all of college basketball. He may seem dry and out of touch to the general public, but behind closed doors he is different.

Sure a lot of his stories might lead to awkward silences of muffled laughter, but he has a passion for the game and his players that is unmatched. And at the end of the day, I knew he cared for every single one of us — even the walk-on.

Playing basketball here was a dream come true, but in the end, I decided to "walk-off" the team. I made the decision so I could go overseas and do service work during summers.

There is a new No. 10 this year. Another walk-on.

Give him your best, because I guarantee he is a bit nervous.

+



{new home, new results?}

Nope. Tony Bethel didn't want to consider any other schools.

There was no doubt — he was all about Georgetown basketball. ¶ The senior at Montrose Christian grew up a huge Hoyas fan, one of the reasons being its close proximity to his hometown of Ft. Washington, Md. ¶ So there wasn't much hesitation for Bethel when Georgetown offered him a basketball scholarship in 2001. ¶ **Bethel signed a letter of intent fairly quickly.** ¶ By Ryan Reynolds

Aspirations of having a college career like former Hoya Allen Iverson, his favorite player growing up, loomed large in his mind. But things have changed. Bethel now plays for N.C. State, but that doesn't mean he wasn't excelling in the Big East.

There was little doubt that Bethel would have an immediate impact in the Georgetown backcourt.

After all, he grew up watching his older brother excel at the game, and Bethel mimicked his every move — and dribble.

GROWING UP IN THE HOYAS BACKYARD

Eric Bethel couldn't escape the house to play basketball without having his younger brother following him out the door. Even though he was five years younger, Tony Bethel didn't know any better than to tag along.

Tony attributes all his talent to his older brother because of all the time they spent playing basketball together.

It makes sense that the person who taught Tony the fundamentals of basketball is now a schoolteacher in Washington, D.C.

"He's my best friend and a blessing to have," Bethel said.

Alternative versions of basketball were even played inside the Bethel household.

"We did it all," Bethel said. "We did the coat hanger in the room on rainy days, shooting until our clothes were dirty. Even when I was little, my father and I used to make hoops with our arms."

Still, it was his brother who Tony idolized on the basketball court when he wasn't watching Georgetown games.

"He's been a big influence on my life," Bethel said. "My parents would always tease me because I wasn't a real kid, I didn't play with toys a lot. I was trying to follow him and play football and basketball and all types of sports."

There came a time when Bethel couldn't hang out with his older brother all the time, though. Eric Bethel committed to play basketball at Mount. St. Mary's, a small private school in Maryland.

But Bethel met someone else he spent a lot of time playing basketball with, current N.C. State forward Levi Watkins. The two played basketball together at Montrose Christian and on AAU teams.

"We would make bets as to who was going to make the most dunks in a game in high school," Bethel said.

Their friendship went beyond the court, but a lot of times it didn't stray too far away from basketball.

"We would hang out at each other's houses," Watkins said. "We know each other's families, and I would go

over to his place and play some video games — some NBA Live."

Despite the bond they established on and off the court, Bethel and Watkins decided to make their decisions on college independent of each other.

Watkins decided to commit to N.C. State and was part of one of the best recruiting class in the Herb Sendek coaching era, while Bethel opted to stay closer to home and play for his favorite school — Georgetown.

DIFFERENT FROM WHAT WAS EXPECTED

Bethel was playing for a team he had avidly rooted for since he was a child. He was going to live out his dream of following in the foot steps of Iverson and lead the Hoyas to Big East prosperity.

He was wrong. The situation just wasn't right.

"I didn't feel I was getting better at Georgetown," he said.

Despite his dissatisfaction with the team, Bethel started almost every game at point guard in two seasons for the Hoyas and averaged nearly 11 points per game as a sophomore. Bethel led Georgetown to the finals of the NIT in the 2002 season but requested the school release him from his scholarship so he could transfer elsewhere.

One week after Bethel was released, Clemson and Virginia Tech showed interest in the 6-foot-2 point guard, but a call from his old friend Levi had Bethel considering another ACC school.

"His advice was the real key to me coming here [N.C. State]," Bethel said. "He told me about Coach Sendek, the offense and the group of guys that we had here, and how I would fit in. It helped me a lot in my decision."

WITNESSING A PAINFUL SEASON FROM THE BENCH

Because of NCAA transfer rules, Bethel was required to sit out last season, but he could practice with the team.

The result was witnessing one of the most heartbreaking seasons in Wolfpack history, which included a dramatic loss to Vanderbilt in the second round of the NCAA Tournament. A loss Coach Sendek would describe as "a bone-crushing defeat that brought me to my knees."

But the year off helped Bethel grasp the complexities of the Princeton-style offense run by Sendek and spend some time in the weight room.

"Maybe the one most striking difference with Tony is that he's really developed his body," "He's a great deal stronger and more physically imposing than a year ago," Sendek said. "And a year in the system has really helped him get more comfortable with what we do."

But last season was more about learning the system and improving his game. It was about learning some of the pains that go along with playing in the most competitive conference in the nation. And it hurt Bethel just as much as the players on the court, mainly because he had invested so much into the team during practice throughout the season.

"We worked so hard last year and we were in a good position to be No. 1 in the ACC if we wouldn't have had those two losses at the end of the season," Bethel said.

And what about the loss to Vanderbilt?

"That's still on our mind," he said.

THE BEST BACKCOURT IN THE ACC?

ACC Player of the Year Julius Hodge made it very clear on April 15 when he announced the decision to stay at State for his senior season. One of the reasons was because of Bethel.

Hodge thinks that the combination of Bethel and himself could form the best backcourt in the nation.

"We compliment each other well," Hodge said. "He's a point guard, but he's not the type of point guard that has to dominate the ball. He can go and be an off-guard and let me handle some of the point guard duties."

"With me doing that, he could become a scorer and I could be a passer. We've really been gelling well during practice, and I think it's really going to turn people's heads when they see us out there together."

There are pieces to the Pack puzzle that could have the team competing for an ACC and national championship this year, and Bethel just may be the one piece that could have been missing from last year's squad.

"I think he's going to help everyone out," freshman Cedric Simmons said. "Not just me but everyone around him, because he's such a smart player and he's unselfish. He gets everyone involved and thinks 'team first and me second.'"

Bethel also thinks his game models someone else other than his favorite Georgetown player, Iverson.

"Right now I would say Tony Parker — quick, likes to play defense, looking to make the pass to the extra pass to an open man and can shoot," Bethel said.

That attitude has Hodge pleased of his aspirations for the transfer guard.

"I think he's really going help us out big time this year," Hodge said.

And Bethel might be exactly the player State needs to win something Hodge committed to once signing a letter of intent at N.C. State — an ACC title and a national championship.



PROTECTING
**THEIR
COURT**

STORY BY ASHLEY HINK

They stomp their feet, making the bleachers furiously shake. They clap, chant and shout along to the cheers lead by cheerleaders. They shed heavy winter coats to paint their faces and bodies in a collage of red and white.

They make signs, praising the five young men that eagerly take the court in a celebrity-like entrance, ready to bring their best game and represent the university.

They are the student fans of the men's basketball team. With just a few bodies separating them from the body heat, sweat and intensity on the RBC Center's court, fans take on an intimate role in supporting the Pack's players.

Support, however, isn't the only thing fans bring to the game.

Robert Gresham a sophomore in forestry recognizes the student's dual role as fans.

"Students are supposed to cheer on their team, and mess the other one up," he said.

Student fans now serve equal doses of moral destruction to opposing teams as they do encouragement to Pack players. Heckling takes on various mediums, from taunts, signs and chants to personal attacks on opposing players. It's become an art form.

Phillip Danford, a junior in criminology, said "You've got to be creative when heckling players."

Creative they are, but no great art comes without controversy.

Tony Bethel, the junior guard transfer from Georgetown didn't get to travel with the team last season and has yet to experience the wrath of Cameron Crazyes or the profanities of the Terps' troops.

"But I know what our fans are like here," Bethel said. "They [opposing teams] should be afraid of our fans."

Whether the taunts of NCSU student fans affect the psyche of opposing players or not, they know how to talk some smack.

Exhibition games typically draw only a fraction of an ACC game crowd and little attention from fans, but that didn't stop Caleb Batts, a junior in criminology, from painting his face red and white at last week's game against St. Augustine's College.

Batts and friends Danford and Lance Futrell, a junior in sports management, came out to support the Pack and torment a few of the players.

Midway through the first half, Futrell shouted, "Go back to the YMCA!" at the losing Division II Falcons, while Batts and Danford repeatedly reminded Falcon's Coach Thomas Hargrove to wipe the sweat off his forehead and taunted an assistant coach about his pin-stripped suit and pink-pastel tie.

On the other side of the court, Gresham targets Allen Iverson look-alike Chip Neely, who wears an elbow warmer. After he was called for a foul, Gresham shouts, "Hey Iverson, the sock goes on the foot. Horrible fashion statement – foul!"

Bringing out their pre-season heckling, these avid fans are no strangers to taunting opposing players. Batts and Danford are heckling pros, having the art nearly down to protocol.

"You've got to call them out," Danford said. "If a player isn't paying attention, or picking his nose, whatever, you've got to get him."

Some of the easiest and most popular heckles play off what's happening on the sideline or court. Gresham points out that consistent air balls and missing easy lay-ups are prime targets for heckling.

Yet fans might succeed best when they make heckling personal.

"You have to study up on the players," Batts said. "A must is knowing their criminal record."

Danford chimes in, "Yeah, SAT scores and grades are good too. And if there

is a rumor going around, you have to nail them on that."

So what players are on the must-heckle list this season?

"Oh, [Duke guard] JJ Redick and [UNC swingman] Rashad McCants are totally going to get it," Batts said.

Gresham agrees that McCants, a past heckle favorite of Pack fans, will be a prime target again, but for different reasons.

"McCants jail comment will definitely come up," Grisham said.

Knowing rumors, criminal records and personal information has proven to be good material, but for Batts and Danford, friends of the enemy have given them their best heckle material yet.

Laughing and proud to recall their most successful heckle yet, Batts remembers last season's game against Duke.

"We got Chris Duhon's cell phone number from a mutual friend," Batts said. "I actually called him [Duhon] the week before the game, just to make sure it was the right number. I told him to look out when he comes to Raleigh."

When Duhon did arrive for the game, Batts and Danford surprised him by making and handing out signs that read, "Call for a good time," with his phone number and picture.

The two students have gained the attention of heckled players like Drew Nicholas and Steven Blake, who pointed Batts and Danford out in past games. Player's families have noticed them, too.

After yelling to Redick, "His sisters were as ugly as his' backne," Batts and Danford said they received a cascade of dirty looks from Redick's sisters, who just so happened to be sitting in front of them.

They also had water thrown on them by a mother of a Georgia Tech player last season after making a crude remark about her son, second-team All-ACC guard B.J. Elder.

While often funny and entertaining to fellow student fans, the sometimes dirty and rude heckling provokes criticism from older fans and administrators that find it inappropriate.

The University of Maryland found itself in the national spotlight last season after a slew of student fans chanted "F*** Duke" and wore T-shirts with that same phrase.

Administrators there and across the country found themselves asking, when do fans cross the line?

Batts claims that NCSU fans are "a lot different than those at Maryland."

Noting that the chant towards Duke was inappropriate, he added, "We're in the Student Wolfpack Club, there's a line we don't cross."

What exactly defines the line? Gresham claims that sexual references and profanities are not appropriate, then points at a family sitting in front of him and adds, "Especially when kids are around. If I were a parent, I wouldn't want my children to hear those things."

Yet NCSU did receive heat from some campus administrators after chanting "S-T-D" at McCants last season. Was it too far? Gresham thinks not.

"The STD chant – that was genius," Gresham said. "If anything would get to someone's head, that would."

Noting student's role in cheering at basketball games, Gresham said, "I don't think students should be restricted."

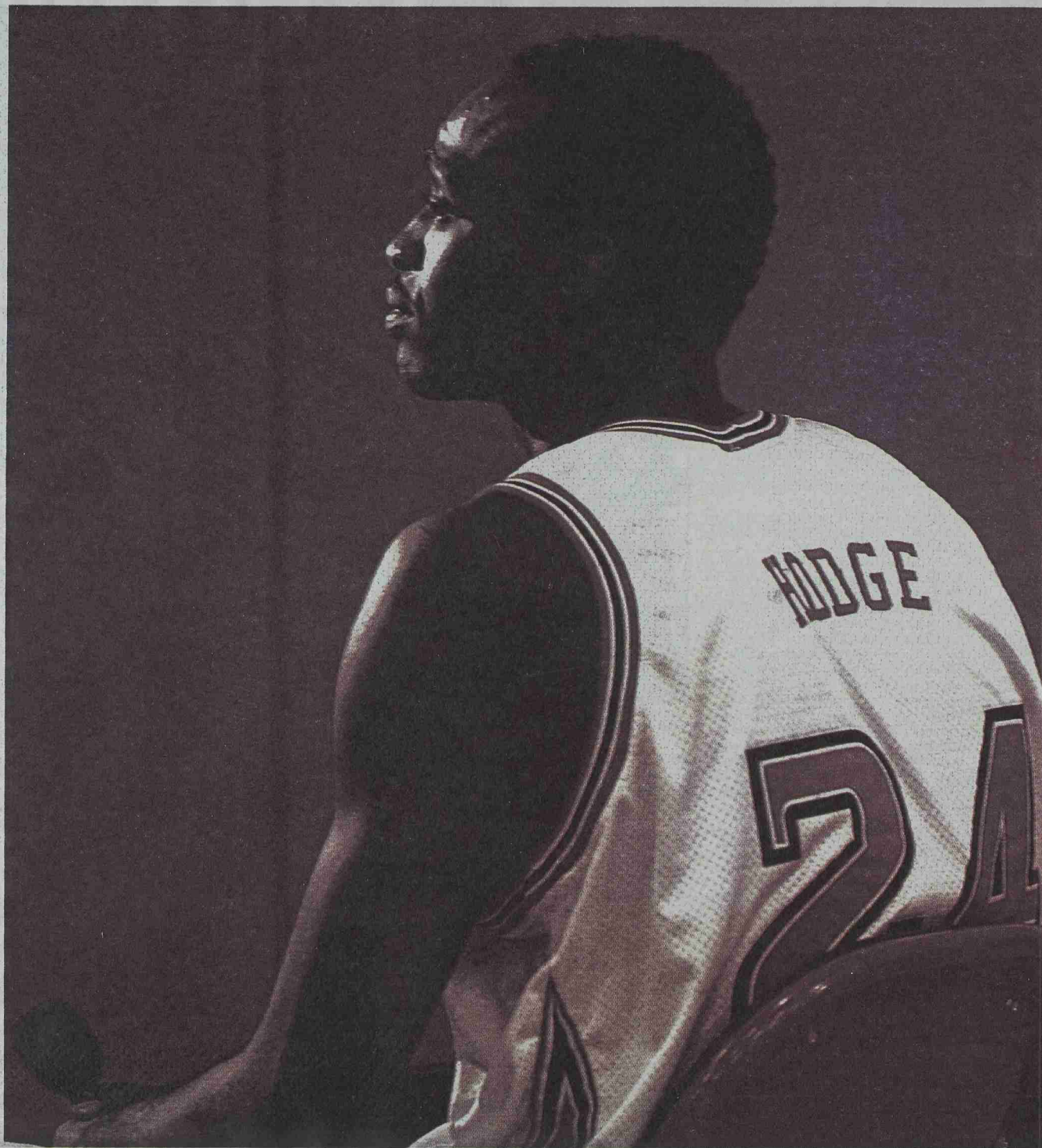
Crossing the line or not, it's a guarantee that NCSU student fans will bring their most creative taunts to this season's highly anticipated ACC games.

The Cameron Crazyes might be notorious for their "You, you, you" jabs at players and "Hey, hey, you will work for us someday" chants, but as of the last meeting between NCSU and Duke, Duhon was out-smarted by a couple of witty fans with a great connection, and Duke, well, was out-played by five Pack players on the court.

NCSU student fans are well on their way to perfecting the art of heckling and Bethel might be right, other teams should be afraid when they come to the home of the Wolfpack.



SHOUT OUT: Sophomores Rainor Gresham and Mark Eades yell at St. Augustine's Chip Neely about his Allen Iverson-esque appearance.



one last shot

151st Street, Harlem, New York.

A small apartment. There are two bedrooms, a living room, a small kitchen and a single bathroom. Jackie Robinson Park sits just a few blocks to the west, the Bronx about a mile to the north.

It's in this two-bedroom tenement that a single mother raises her two sons and her daughter. It's here where the story of Julius Hodge begins.

Hodge is 4 years old, attending a New York Knicks game against the Los Angeles Lakers. It's his first memory of basketball.

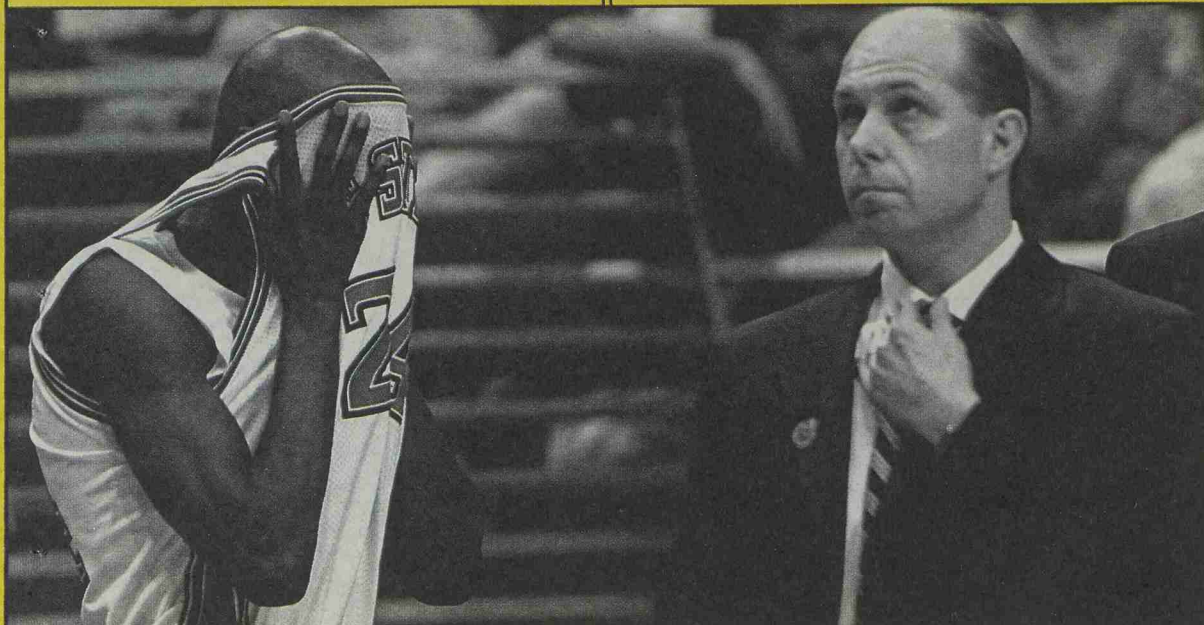
"A ball went in the stands and I just remember my mom throwing it back to Magic [Johnson] and me just smiling," Hodge said. "Just smiling and laughing and then he kind of winked his eye at me."

A wink from Magic is all it takes. Hodge knows what he wants to be when he grows up. He wants to play basketball.

"I always just wanted to be an NBA Hall of Famer," Hodge said. "I just didn't want to be a guy on the court."

STORY BY AUSTIN JOHNSON

one last shot



UNBEARABLE: Julius Hodge can't bear to watch NCSU's late lead vanish against Vanderbilt in last March's NCAA Tournament, as anguished Coach Herb Sendek surveys the scene for him.

Hodge is 8 now, and his father is a part of his past, but not his future. His father does leave one imprint on the childhood of Hodge.

"The best thing he did for me is he took me one Saturday morning to the Gauch organization, that's in the Bronx, an AAU team, that's pretty much where I started my basketball career," Hodge said. "Besides that he didn't play much of a role in me growing as a person."

Hodge is in high school now, a star at Saint Raymond's. Where his father isn't, his older brother is.

Steve Hodge, along with Hodge's mother, help keep his head out of the clouds and on hard work, finishing school. His mother doesn't get on him about much, but she gets upset when Hodge doesn't focus on his schoolwork. His brother guides him, encouraging Hodge to keep working — basketball could be his meal ticket out, Steve tells him.

"With my father leaving when I was a young child, that was definitely tough," Hodge said. "But my brother stepped in and filled his shoes to a 'T' and even better."

Hodge is McDonalds All-American, a Parade All-American and New York's Mr. Basketball his senior year. He's also committed to N.C. State University, a program that hasn't been to the NCAA Tournament in 10 years.

IMMEDIATE IMPACT

Hodge is a freshman, and he walks into the Wolfpack basketball world with an unwavering confidence. He starts throwing around the word "championship" as though he had just joined up with the Blue Devils or Jayhawks.

He's here to win the big one, he says. Those listening chalk his statements up to youthful ignorance. His teammates, though, listened.

"He's a natural born leader," former-teammate Will Roach said. "That's why he came here, to be a leader and win a championship."

It's December, but the cold outside the Carrier Dome doesn't match the chill rippling through the echoing stadium on this night some three years ago.

"He's a natural born leader. That's why he came here, to be a leader and win a championship."

-Will Roach, former teammate

Out of nowhere, the Wolfpack had taken a late lead on No. 9 Syracuse, with the game slowly becoming out of reach.

Hodge, the New York native who shunned orange in favor of red plays with a chorus of boos following every touch of the ball. The symphony of hate that poured into the ear of the freshman that night did little to unnerve him, as he sank 7-of-10 free throws and finished with 12 points in a win.

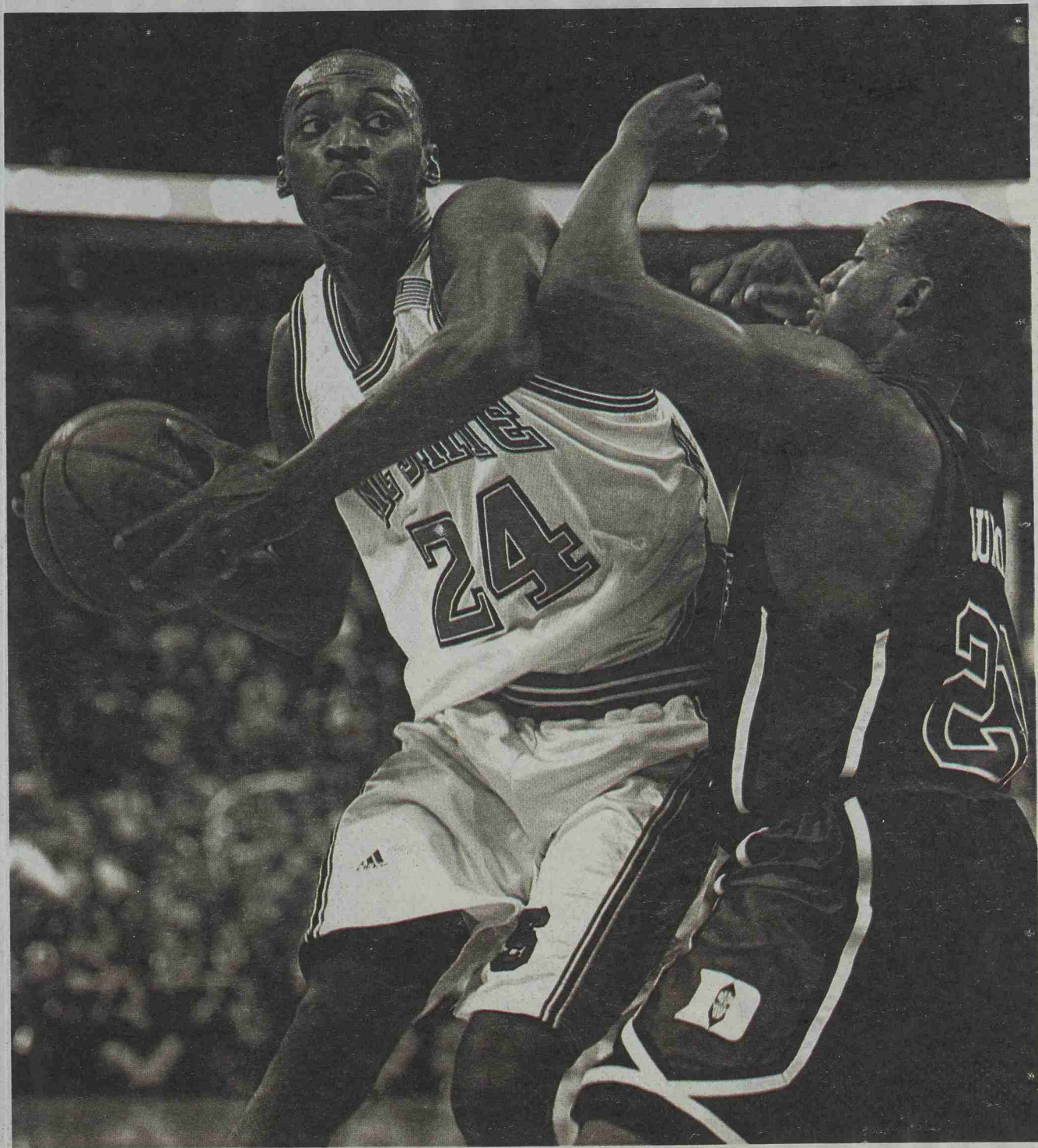
A win that proved to be the first step in reestablishing State as a respected basketball program again. But it was just a taste of what Hodge had to offer.

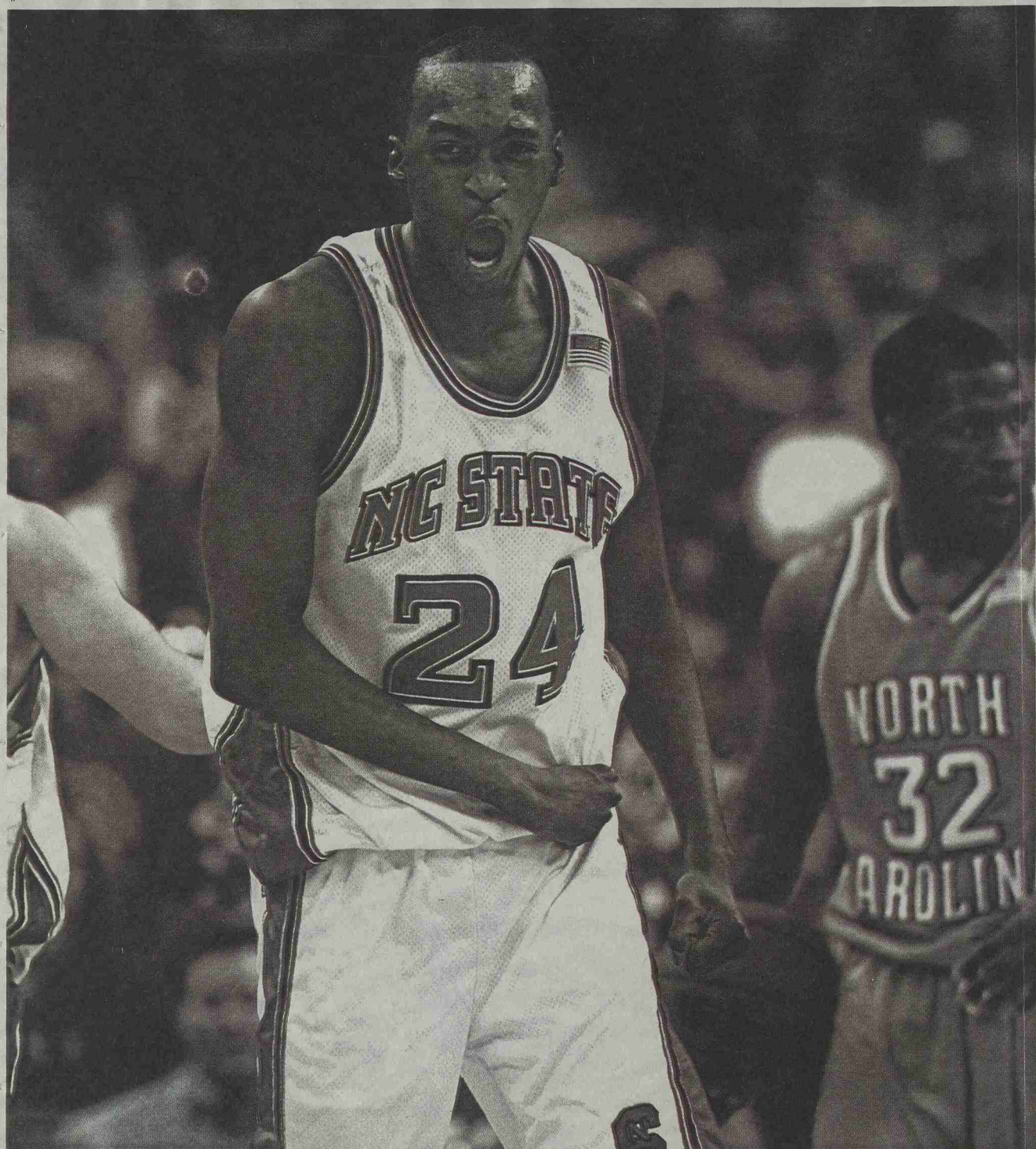
"I had over 30,000 people wanting me not to do good, but with me playing well and my team winning," Hodge said. "That just told me I could do anything if I put my mind to it."

Hodge is all but robbed of the ACC Rookie of the Year award. He leads all freshman in scoring and ranks second in assists, rebounding and steals. He receives more votes than anyone else on the All-ACC freshman team, but falls to Georgia Tech's Ed Nelson for the rookie honor. His revenge would come on the court.

It's the ACC Tournament, and March Madness is in full swing with State up 79-66 on Maryland, the regular-season conference champions. There are but a

VERSATILE: Hodge drives the lane against Chris Duhon last February's win over No. 1 Duke.





"I really don't care if opposing players don't like me. I would much rather have it that way because he could feel more anguish and disgust when my team is winning."

-Julius Hodge

few scant minutes left, and the Terrapins start fouling. It's working, State can't hit its free throws.

One after another the shots clank off the rim, as Maryland draws closer and closer and the air surrounding the Wolfpack players gets thicker.

The lead is only three points now, and State has the ball with the shot clock winding down. The team can't find an open look. Time ticks... 3, 2..... Hodge launches a desperation 3-pointer. Swish.

"Julius just stepped up and made a great shot," State Coach Herb Sendek said. "Great players do that."

BLOOD, SWEAT AND TEARS

The Pack is back in the tournament.

The team sits on the cusp on the Sweet 16. Down by a point with time dwindling, Hodge is on Connecticut's Caron Butler like fly paper, not giving an inch to the man who has single-handedly given the Huskies this lead. Desperate to get off a shot before the 35-second clock expires, he rises up and shoots, Hodge still right with him.

The shot clangs away. But there is a whistle. Hodge is called for a foul, giving Butler three shots. He makes all of them.

A few seconds later, a desperation 25-foot shot by Hodge glances off the front of the rim to end State's season. He falls face down at midcourt and stays down, unable to accept his fate.

"I thought I was just playing really good defense," said Hodge. "I didn't think I fouled him, but obviously the official did."

It's December 2002. Hodge is a year older and completely in the spotlight as State's star player. Hodge is playing a relatively meaningless early season game against North Carolina A&T at Reynolds Coliseum.

The sophomore is dropping bounce passes for highlight-reel dunks to his teammates, grabbing rebounds and barely shooting. He amasses a triple-double, the first in N.C. State history. He is versatile in a way that is becoming rare among basketball players — he wants to be really good at everything.

"That's what makes him so special," Sendek said. "His value comes from the fact he can be among the statistical leaders and contribute in any numbers of categories. He's not a specialist; he's a versatile player who can do everything."

The clock reads 1 a.m., and State is on a bus ride back from a brutal road loss to Maryland in late January. As the team approaches Raleigh, Hodge goes to the back of the bus and asks a simple question to fellow sophomore Roach.

"He comes back and says, 'Do you want to get some shots up?'" Roach said.

Hodge convinces Roach and Marcus Melvin to come shoot with him in the middle of the night. The three play one-on-one for more than an hour. Hodge wins every game.

"I've never seen anyone with that much energy," Roach said.

It's March again, and State is in the NCAA Tournament for a second straight year, this time drawing California in the opening round. It's overtime, and Scooter Sherrill has just buried a 5-pointer to give State the lead. But Cal comes back with a game-winning 3-pointer of its own, the nail driven into the coffin by an Englishman named Richard Midgley.

Hodge can't hold his emotions in check after the game. He questions everything, from not being asked to carry more of the offensive burden to Sendek's strategy.

"It's just real frustrating," Hodge said. "We come out of the timeout, and we're out there, and we're out there on the court — the players — and we know what's working. And then you have to do something else."

CONFIDENCE OR ARROGANCE

It's the dead of winter, February, and Hodge is pounding the floor, waving his arms to pump up the crowd as State clings to the smallest of leads against No. 1 Duke at home. A junior now, he's on the verge of pulling off his biggest upset. The emotions flow freely from him, this is how Hodge plays the game. He doesn't know any way but full throttle.

It's his desire and passion that has driven him this far, he isn't changing. The league seems to be in consensus about Hodge. He's good, and he's arrogant.

"He has this arrogance type of image around the league," Duke's Daniel Ewing said earlier this season. "Which is good for him, he's a guy that takes on that 'I'm-the-man type of role.' I was talking to him earlier and he was like 'You know you all are going down when you play us at State.'"

Hodge has no problem sharing his thoughts with the rest of the league. Florida State's Anthony Richardson says he respects Hodge in spite of it.

"I don't have anything personal against him," Hodge said. "He does talk a lot of trash, though."

For the opposition, the idea of losing to State is even more painful when Hodge is involved. Watching Hodge skip around the court in ecstasy after taking down your team is the last thing players like Wake Forest's Taron Downey want to see.

"You never want to lose to him because you know he's going to let you know about it if you lose," Downey said.

Hodge is unaffected by the league's perception of him. In typical Hodge fashion, he dismissed the notion of being arrogant.

"Some guys may say I trash talk, some other guys trash talk," Hodge said. "A couple of them, I get on the court and I'm just going to out play them, out work them. If they see that as being arrogant, they could. I just see it as being confident."

"I really don't care if opposing players don't like me. I would much rather have it that way because he could feel more anguish and disgust when my team is winning."

Senior forward Levi Watkins claims that Hodge has always had the same sense of confidence, or arrogance — depending on who you ask.

"Its part of being from New York. That's just him," Watkins said. "He's like that at practice, he's like that when we play video games, he's like that when we're eating. He has a lot of pride in what he does; I can't knock him for that. But if I was on the opposing team, I wouldn't like him."

It's March, and again the Wolfpack has made it to the second round of the NCAAs. State holds a 10-point lead over Vanderbilt with less than three minutes left, the Sweet Sixteen oh-so-close to becoming a reality. Then Hodge fouls out and goes to take a seat on the bench, turning from on-court leader to off-court cheerleader.

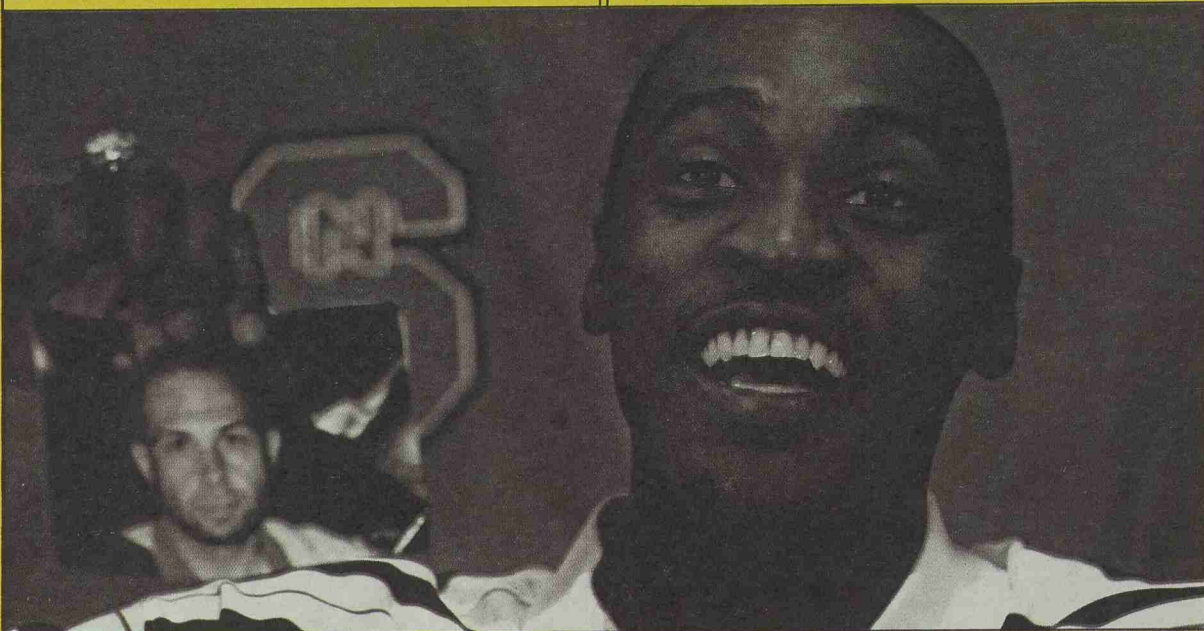
The lead promptly starts melting away before his eyes. He watches Vanderbilt's Matt Freije hit impossible shot after impossible shot, watches his team collapse before him.

When the final buzzer sounds, State is again on the losing end.

Hodge sits motionless, head between his legs and eyes fixated on the floor. He can't look, can't see the same sight all over again. For the third straight year, a heartbreaking tournament loss.

"There's no way I'd thought with 2:44 and me being fouled out of the game and up by 10 points that we were going to lose this game," Hodge said. "The plays that happened, one after the other...it was unbelievable."

one last shot



A DECISION TO STAY

Hodge walks into a press conference with Coach Sendek to tell the world his decision. He sits, stoically and waits for everyone to settle in before he starts. He's going to the NBA, he says. There is a silence in the room. A reporter begins to ask the first question.

"Gotcha!" Hodge says, smile brimming from one ear to the other.

Hodge is a comedian, and the media gives him the perfect performing stage. Even a matter as serious as his decision to stay for his senior year becomes a tool for him to crack jokes and show off embarrassing pictures of his coach. Appropriately, he's taking drama classes at State. Sendek could care less about the jokes, all he cares about is the decision.

"He took inventory along the way, and considered his options and possibilities, but he didn't go in with any predetermined conclusion like some guys do," Sendek said. "I think he evaluated each step along the way, and made decisions that were in him and his family's best interest. He has uncommon maturity."

It's November, and Hodge talks of winning a national championship, just like he had three years earlier. That youthful ignorance is still in full effect, except now it doesn't appear quite as ignorant. Now State is ranked No. 19 in the pre-season AP poll, and is coming off a second-place finish in the ACC. Hodge is the reigning ACC Player of the Year, and the talk of a national championship isn't absurd. Sendek said much of the credit for that fact has to be given to Hodge.

"He's had a remarkable career for us," Sendek said. "When we recruited him we had great expectations for him, and he's certainly met them every step of the way. He's been instrumental in the reestablishment of N.C. State basketball and he deserves a lot of credit for that."

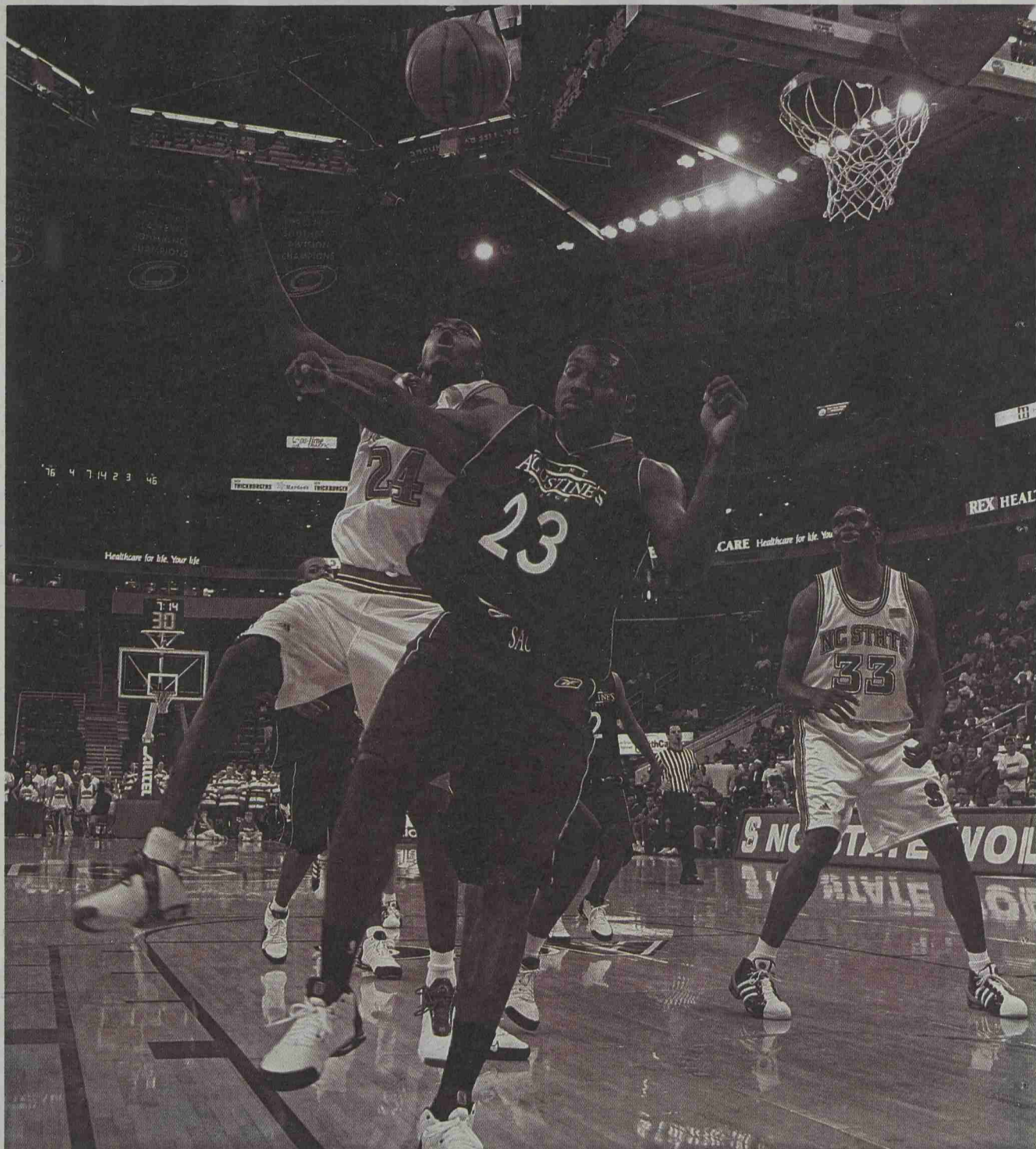
Hodge sits in hallway after practice in late November, waiting for his teammates. He's been through the gauntlet in his time at State, but his only thought now is that he can't wait to get to bed. He has to be up early for a scrimmage tomorrow.

He cracks a smile, and beneath those 21 years of emotion and hard work, a little boy comes through, laughing gleefully as Magic Johnson looks his way and winks.

LEAVE THIS?: (Above) Hodge holds up a less-than-flattering picture of Coach Herb Sendek during his April press conference to announce his intention of staying at N.C. State for his senior year. He says, "How can I leave this man?" holding up the picture of Sendek.

ONE MORE SEASON: (Right) Hodge chases a loose ball in his final exhibition game against St. Augustine's last week.

Hodge walks into a press conference to tell the world his decision. He's going to the NBA, he says. There is a silence in the room. A reporter begins to ask the first question. "Gotcha!" Hodge says, smile brimming from one ear to the other.





ENGIN ATSUR DEALT WITH A NEW LANGUAGE, COUNTRY & CULTURE AS WELL AS THE COLLEGE LIFE...

The theme of Engin Atsur's first year at N.C. State was transitions. If one word exists in the English language to accurately describe everything he had to deal with, it would be "new."

Part of the difficulty for Atsur last year was that he might not have even known that word.

Last year was a challenge for Engin Atsur. Sure, he moved to a new place for college just like a lot of students do. But for him, his new place was thousands of miles and a whole culture away from home.

Last year presented an entirely different breed of basketball for Engin Atsur.

Anyone who watched at the Olympics this summer could tell that international basketball is far different from the brand played here.

Last year brought a disappointing end to a promising season for Engin Atsur and his Wolfpack teammates. But Atsur has a year under his belt, ACC Player of the Year Julius Hodge decided to return for his senior season and the Pack has a slew of talented.

BY BRIAN GROSSMAN

And there are just some words that I make mistakes pronouncing.

The person I'm with will tell me the right way to say it, so I just correct it.

Squirrel is a funny word.

I still can't really say the word.

New Country

A student's first year in college can be stressful enough. Throw in a new language and a new culture combined with the unfamiliar surroundings and that's what Atsur's first year was like.

"It was really different," Atsur, a sophomore guard, said. "It was my first year in America and in school and with basketball.

"I completed things a little bit because, first of all, there's the language problem. It took me a little while to adjust. And then there's a new life away from my family, new friends, new environment and a new culture."

Fellow European Ilian Evtimov was there to aid Atsur in the difficult transition to his new country. Both are fluent in French and would often communicate that way in order to better get points across.

"He had to adjust to the culture and all the people," Evtimov said. "He gets all the jokes that people say now. He makes jokes himself and he's matured a lot. If he needs help, I'm always there for him, but he doesn't call me as much as he did last year at this time.

"I think I went through the same things when I first got here. Coach Sendek's repertoire of words is unheard of. He would use some words that you don't even hear in Shakespeare. I'm sure that Engin kind of struggled with that. It took me about a year or two to get all the terms that Coach was using and what they meant."

Atsur recognizes just how much of a help Evtimov was and said it would have been much more difficult had he not been there.

"It was my first year, and sometimes you need someone to show you the way," Atsur said. "It was great to have Ilian here. He's from Europe, and I had the language problem, so we used to talk in French a little bit."

Atsur said that a lot of his problems came from trying to figure out the language more than any other aspect of this culture or people.

"Coach likes to use a lot of expressions," Atsur said. "You have to be American to understand them, and even some of the guys don't get every expression.

"And there are just some words that I make mistakes pronouncing. The person I'm with will tell me the right way to say it, so I just correct it. Squirrel is a funny word. I still can't really say the word."

The Turkish guard doesn't expect to have those same problems this year, though. He said that with a year's experience in his pocket he should be a much more effective player and student.

"I feel much more comfortable now that it's my second year — I knew it was going to be really hard to adjust," Atsur said. "There's nothing new. I've seen everything before. There are no surprises anymore, whereas last year everything was a surprise. I didn't know what to expect in practice, in social life, in school. This year I feel much more comfortable."

New game

International basketball and American basketball have some very distinct differences. Among these differences

are the 3-point shot distance, the length of quarters and halves and the size of the paint. But some of the most significant difference is the physical style of play in this country, according to Atsur.

"The biggest adjustment is that the game is much more physical here," he said. "As a team we work a lot on our strength, and that was my weakest point. I've been working on that trying to get much stronger."

Evtimov said the sheer number of fans that show up to games can be overwhelming for a newcomer from Europe.

"He had to learn a lot especially coming in last year," Evtimov said. "Not only did he have to learn the language, he had to learn about the different style of play. It's a little different here playing in front of about 20,000 people than in Europe."

Any player trying to make the transition from one game to the other will inevitably have a lot to learn. Atsur's experience was no different, mostly because of the complex offensive system that the Pack runs, Evtimov said.

"It's tough to learn the offense when you're coming in as a freshman, especially when you don't know the language that well," Evtimov said. "There are a lot of words and terms that you have to know. I tried to help him out and give him the translations in French."

New experiences:

One of the first images to come to mind when thinking of last season is Atsur's prayer of a shot as time expired against Vanderbilt in the second round of the NCAA tournament.

For him, the picture is vivid and gut-wrenching.

"I remember the whole last three minutes — the whole scene...I don't think anyone can forget it," Atsur said. "The last shot; of course I wish it were in, but I also wish we played better the whole last three minutes. It was a really bad experience, but we learned the importance of playing the whole game. We have to keep the intensity up the whole time. We were right there for the Sweet 16, but we couldn't finish."

Atsur said the lessons came in bunches throughout the season. And not just for him.

"Last season, we got a lot of lessons," he said. "The last game in the NCAA tournament, we couldn't finish the game. We lost an overtime game and some close games. That was a good lesson. We really need to focus on playing the whole game and finishing teams off."

Despite the way the season ended, Atsur said the whole year was a good experience, especially considering how he excelled during the ACC road games. Atsur made good on 22-of-29 3-balls in ACC road play last year — hitting a 3-pointer in every single league road game.

"I really can't tell you a reason why I played better on the road," he said. "I always like the road games. It's fun to play against adversity."

Following the season, Atsur spent his summer back in Turkey. Former Pack player Will Roach joined him there for two weeks and the two spent some time with Atsur's family.

"Will Roach is a great friend of mine," he said. "He really enjoyed being there, and my family enjoyed having him there. It was great. He liked being around my hometown, and I showed him around."

Atsur had one of the more exciting summers. He got to play with the Turkish national team, which will help him with his toughness and game experience, he said. He practiced around 20 days with pro players, including Turkish NBAers Mehmet Okur and Hedo Turkoglu.

"They are really strong, and they know how to play. I wish I could have stayed longer, but I had to come back for school," Atsur said. "I want to use it for my whole game."

Evtimov thinks the situation couldn't have been better for Atsur. Having played with a foreign national team before, Evtimov understands just how much that experience can help a young player.

"He played with guys on his team that are in the NBA. His team only lost to the Dream Team by 15 points, so that shows you what kind of team he was playing with," Evtimov said.

New beginnings

Another season is set to kick off. It means a chance for Atsur to show how he has matured both physically and mentally. It means he gets the chance to show just how much he can give to the team now that he's more comfortable with the transition to living in America.

"I feel much more comfortable," he said. "Last year at this time I was still learning the offense, but now I know it. That's a great advantage."

Among the other advantages Atsur figures to have this year is the increased weight and strength he worked on adding in the offseason, saying he's gained 15 or 20 pounds since starting the collegiate lifting program.

"It's not my first concern right now, but it was last year," he said. "I got much stronger. Now I'm just trying to help my team in every area I can. That's my only concern right now."

Not that he has anymore worries. Playing the point guard role in the Pack's position-less offense a year ago, Atsur says his game will remain unchanged despite the addition of Georgetown transfer point guard Tony Bethel.

"It doesn't really matter who brings the ball up the court, but it will be fun to play with him," Atsur said.

And the fun of the game is all that really matters to a guy like Atsur. He doesn't care what he has to do on the floor as long as he's out there. That's part of what made his tough transitions over the past year seem not quite so tough.

"I just want to go out and play with this team," he said. "We have great talent. Our goal is always to be the best. We have higher goals this year because we are a better team."

"I enjoy defense as much as shooting a 3. There's a great satisfaction in stopping an offensive player. I think every part of the game is a different feeling and I try to look at the whole.

"The new guys and the old guys, and the coaching staff — we're really great together. We have great chemistry and I can't wait to play with these guys."

On Shots

TIM COFFIELD

I learned basketball in sixth grade. I learned it on the hard-knock blacktops near my house.

OK, so they were cul-de-sacs. But our cul-de-sacs were hard-knock. Women in mini-vans backing out nearby driveways would lock their doors. Joggers would hustle past, refusing to look, unable to look. Because they knew we were such bad characters.

We had chain nets. We cussed. We took our shirts off, except for Kyle, because he was fat. And except for me because I just didn't feel like it. And we'd spit loogies on the pavement. And we never called fouls, unless we got blocked.

My specialty was rebounds. Kyle's too, but I was better. "Coffield!" they'd say. "You stand down there under the hoop, and hold your arms up. Yeah. Like that. Now if someone misses, you get that ball. Then hold on tight as you can, and hand it to Latham."

Latham was our shot-maker. He wasn't from the neighborhood. He'd just started showing up that winter, asking to play. Then he'd slice every shot through the net, talking the loudest crap the whole time. We played to 21. His team would win by 17.

He was the kind of kid. Whatever high-tops he wore were the ones you realized you should've gotten, which was weird, because his were so old you couldn't even recognize the brand. He was a natural leader. You could see it in his eyes. When he handed you a joint after the game, you took it. You felt honored. Saying no was absurd, saying no was like not liking Tupac.

So whenever I snagged a rebound, Latham would jog over and I'd give him a handoff. Then he'd dribble back outside and do what everyone on both teams knew he was going to do, which was shoot a jump shot. And I wouldn't even bother to get ready for a rebound, because we all knew there wouldn't be one.

And then sing-songy he'd be like, "Oh, snap! Das *anutha* 3 for La-tham, bitches!"

And he'd strut around, pumping his fists. We'd look at the pavement, tie our shoes, whatever. We knew better than to talk back.

Because Kyle did one time, and we saw what happened to him. Latham had just drilled another 3, but Kyle thought his foot had been over the 3-point line, which was a crack in the pavement. So Kyle, under his breath, called "B*****"

And the worst part of it wasn't when Latham then called for the ball and after I tossed it to him he pegged Kyle right square in the nose from only like four feet away.

No, the worst part was that after that game he took us all for a ride in his big-ass, smoke-spitting purple BelAir. Except Kyle.

He made us shut the door right in Kyle's face. It was almost kind of sad the way Kyle just kind of stood there, looking even fatter than usual because his shirt had rode up above his belly button, with his nose still bleeding some and his hair hanging in his eyes, watching us as we drove away. So naturally we idolized the guy. But we idolized him in secret.

Our parents would not have approved. He was not standard role model material. He was not famous. He was not particularly ethical.

But he had all the things we wished we had. He was self-confident. He was smooth. He had these unbelievable old scars on his arms. He had no problem getting cigarettes or finding weed. And, as he liked to remind us, he didn't even live with his parents anymore. And his jump-shot, of course, was lights-out.

We did not doubt that he was headed for greatness. Which, in retrospect, probably says just as much about us as it did about him.

The last time I saw him, he'd just set what we all agreed was probably a record. Twenty-two for 24 over four games. All 3's. And then on the last play, he dunked. He dunked over me. It was demoralizing. A good dunk transcends the game. It becomes a statement about manhood. And I fell down.

So after the game everyone walked home, except me. Latham had invited me to share a joint with him in the BelAir. We sat in the BelAir in silence, watching the smoke stick to the windshield. Then I was hungry and thinking about mom's hot lasagna, so I opened the door to leave.

That's when he grabbed my shoulder. It was weird because he grabbed me, then he didn't even look at me.

He just stared at the steering wheel. And, deadpan, he was like, "So, man, you like this place all right?" meaning the neighborhood.

And I was like, "It's OK."

Then he was quiet for a moment. And then he wanted to know if I had five bucks, because he couldn't stop thinking about cheeseburgers. Which surprised me, because then I noticed how very skinny he was when he wasn't shooting basketballs — how his forearm, which was still on my shoulder, looked like a map from all the veins.

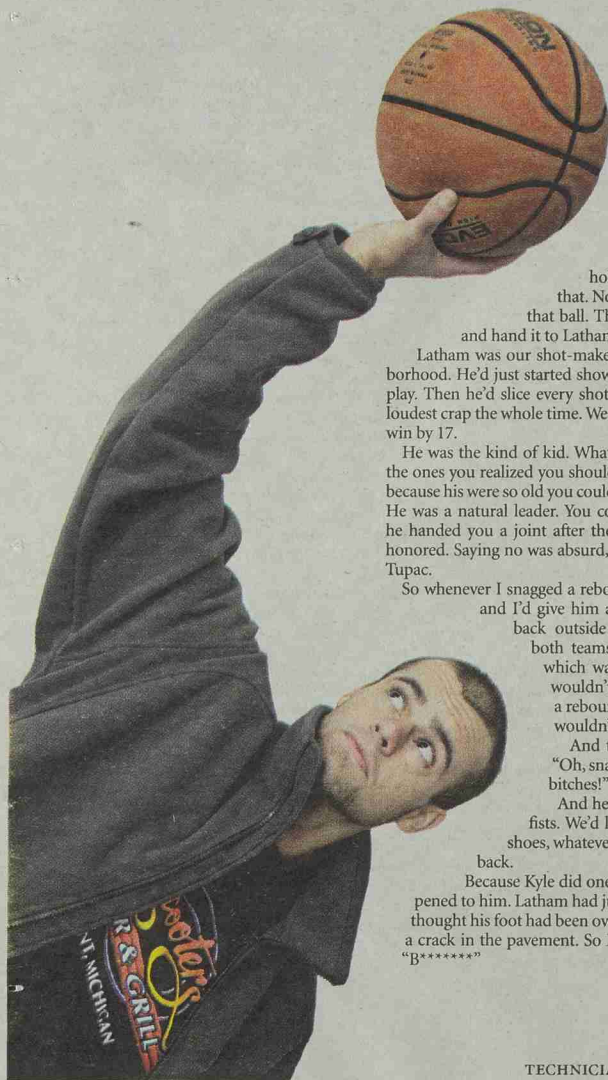
I said I didn't. He said did I have anything at all, whatever I had would work. That was when he finally looked at me.

I said, "No, man." I wasn't lying.

He was quiet. He looked very small in the BelAir's giant bucket seat. I realized how disgusting his car smelled. It was weird. I was angry, I wanted to leave. So I got out and walked home.

A week later mom saw his mugshot in the newspaper and said, "It makes me so mad about these kids, these stupid, idiot kids that think they own the world. That the world owes them something they haven't got, so they just go and take it and don't care who gets hurt."

And, polishing off my third bowl of cereal, I looked up. And I said, "Yeah," and I said, "I know."



Burritos

Joey bag of Donuts

Rice, beans, choice of meat, shredded cheese, and salsa

Triple Lindy

Rice, beans, choice of meat, shredded cheese, salsa, and guacamole

Homewrecker

Rice, beans, choice of meat, shredded cheese, salsa, guacamole, sour cream, and lettuce
Art Vandelay Rice, beans, shredded cheese, salsa, sour cream, guacamole, and lettuce (vegetarian)

Fajitas

Pinky Tuscanero

Lettuce, cucumbers, salsa, shredded cheese, black olives (vegetarian)

Close Talker

Lettuce, beans, cucumbers, salsa, shredded cheese, black olives, with choice of grilled chicken, steak or tofu.

Quesadillas

Sherman Klump

Shredded cheese with a side of salsa and sour cream

John Coctostan

Choice of meat, beans, shredded cheese, salsa, sour cream

I Said Posse

Shredded cheese, beans, salsa, sour cream, sauteed veggies (vegetarian)

Nachos

Rupriect

Beans, shredded cheese, salsa, jalapenos, and black olives (vegetarian)

Billy Baron

Beans, shredded cheese, salsa, jalapenos, black olives, and choice of chicken, steak or tofu.

Salads

Alfredo Garcia

Choice of grilled chicken, steak or tofu with lettuce, salsa, and shredded cheese

Fat Sam

Choice of grilled chicken, steak, or tofu with lettuce, salsa, shredded cheese, guacamole and sour cream.

Tacos

The Full Monty

Beans, choice of meat, shredded cheese, salsa, and lettuce

The Other Lewinsky

Beans, choice of meat, shredded cheese, salsa, lettuce, sour cream and guacamole

The Ugly Naked Guy

Beans, shredded cheese, salsa, lettuce, sour cream, and guacamole (vegetarian)

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 4

Key Players Forward Sharrod Ford (11.9 PPG, 7.2 RPG), Guard Shawn Robinson (10.8 PPG, 3.1 RPG), Forward Olu Balbalola (9.0 PPG, 4.6 RPG)

Quote "We went out and got some long, athletic guys-guys with toughness. I like those guys who play multiple positions. Obviously, ball handling was an issue last season, so we brought in a host of perimeter guys."—Coach Oliver Purnell

UNC

Feb. 3, Chapel Hill; Feb. 22, Raleigh

Background The Tar Heels are predicted to make a run to the top of the conference standings, attempting to finally jump the barrier that prevented a noteworthy 2003-2004 season. If Carolina can manage to win close games this season, the team may create some serious noise for the first time in five years.

Key Players Forward Rashad McCants (20.0 PPG, 4.6 RPG), Center Sean May (15.2 PPG, 9.8 RPG), Forward Jawad Williams (12.6 PPG, 5.4 RPG)

Quote "We had such a change in style last year that we didn't see as many positives as we wanted to. Maybe now with the same voice saying the same thing for the second consecutive year, it will make it easier for them."—Coach Roy Williams

Virginia

Feb. 5, Raleigh, March 2, Charlottesville, Va.

Background After seasons raided by countless injuries and abysmal performances, Coach Pete Gillen has one of the deepest teams Virginia has seen recently, including a talented freshman class. However, with the tough conference competition this year, the Cavaliers' mediocre program may simply prove to be a wash—even with scoring contributions at the post from Brown.

Key Players Forward Elton Brown (14.8 PPG, 6.3 RPG), Forward Kevin Smith (12.2 PPG, 5.1 RPG)

Quote "I think this will be our deepest team at Virginia. I think it will also be our most athletic. We are not there yet. We are still young, but we have good talent."—Coach Pete Gillen

Wake Forest

Feb. 10, Winston-Salem; March 6, Raleigh

Background Not only does Wake Forest have five returning starters from the successful roster of last year, it could potentially maintain six starters depending of the offensive structure established by Coach Skip Prosser. With such experience, the Deacons have high expectations for the season, being voted first in the ACC preseason poll.

Key Players Guard Justin Gray (17.0 PPG, 3.2 RPG), Guard Chris Paul (14.8 PPG, 3.3 RPG), Center Eric Williams (12.4 PPG, 5.6 RPG)

Quote "I think the two things we have are talent and experience. I think we have a good blend of that. Everyone is healthy and mentally in the right place."—Coach Skip Prosser

PREDICTIONS

TOPS IN THE ACC

1. Wake Forest (4) — 73
2. N.C. State (2) — 67
3. Duke — 64
4. North Carolina (1) — 59
5. Georgia Tech — 46
6. Maryland — 45
7. Florida State — 35
8. Virginia — 30
9. Clemson — 20
10. Virginia Tech — 13
11. Miami — 10

PLAYER OF THE YEAR Julius Hodge, NCSU

Others receiving votes: Chris Paul, Wake Forest

ROOKIE OF THE YEAR: Marvin Williams, UNC

Others receiving votes: DeMarcus Nelson, Duke; David McClure, Duke; Cedric Simmons, NCSU

VOTING PANEL: The News & Observer's Chip Alexander, Athletics Director Lee Fowler, WRAL-TV's Tom Suiter, Hillsborough St. Fiddler David McKnight, Technician's Austin Johnson, Matt Middleton and Ryan Reynolds



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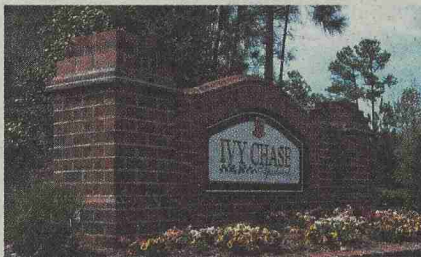
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