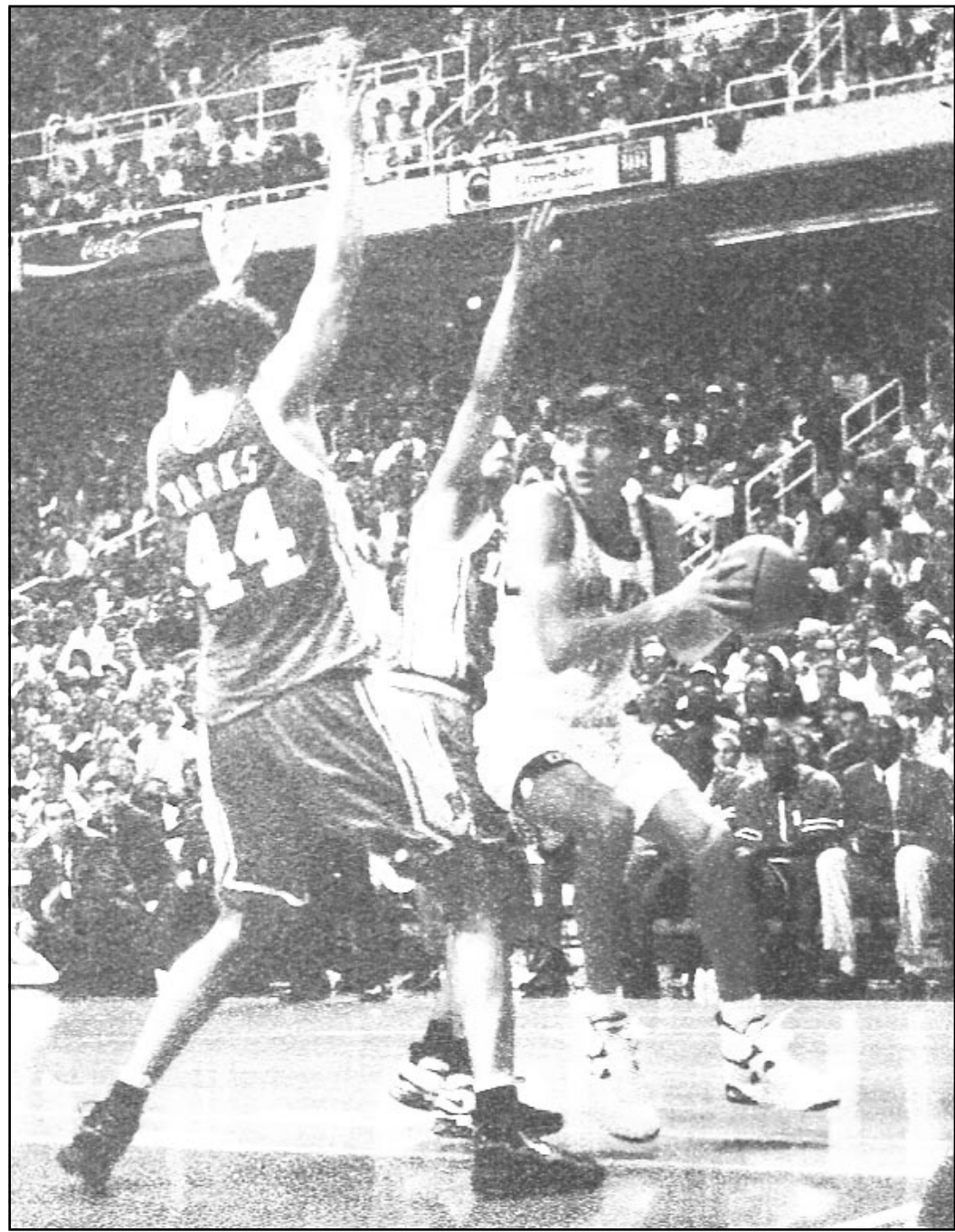


ACC Basketball Preview

OLD GOLD AND BLACK

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Nick Zachos

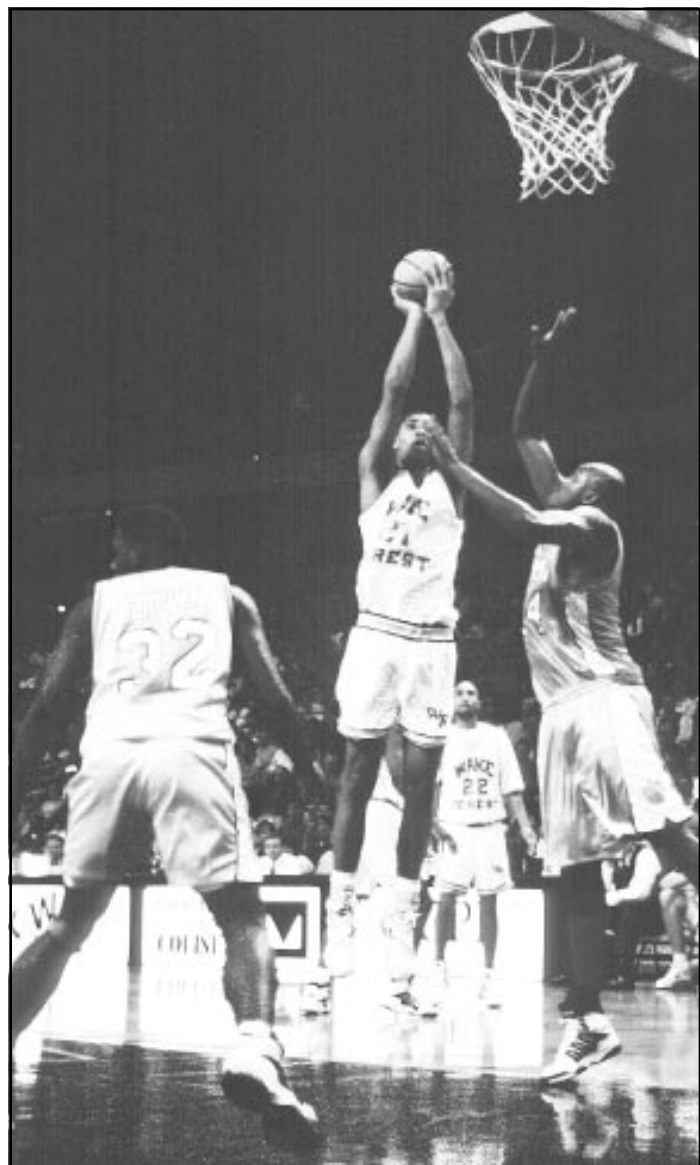
What's Inside:

Demon Deacons

Men's Team Preview	C2
Women's Team Preview	C2
Men's Player Previews	C3-4
Women's Player Previews	C5
Team Schedules	C8

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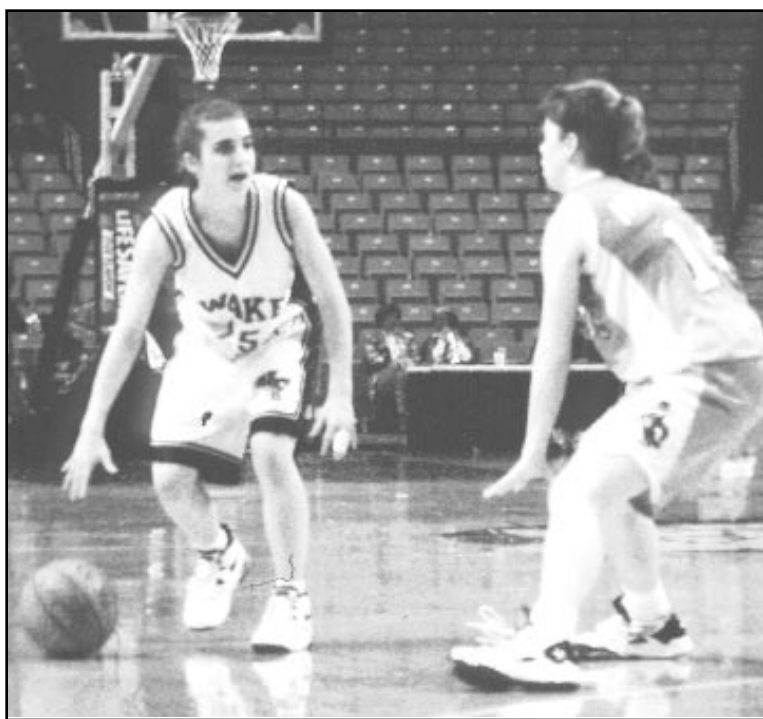
Clemson	C7
Duke	C6
Florida State	C7
Georgia Tech	C6
Maryland	C7
N.C. State	C7
UNC	C6
UVa	C6
OG&B preseason picks	C3



Courtesy of Howler

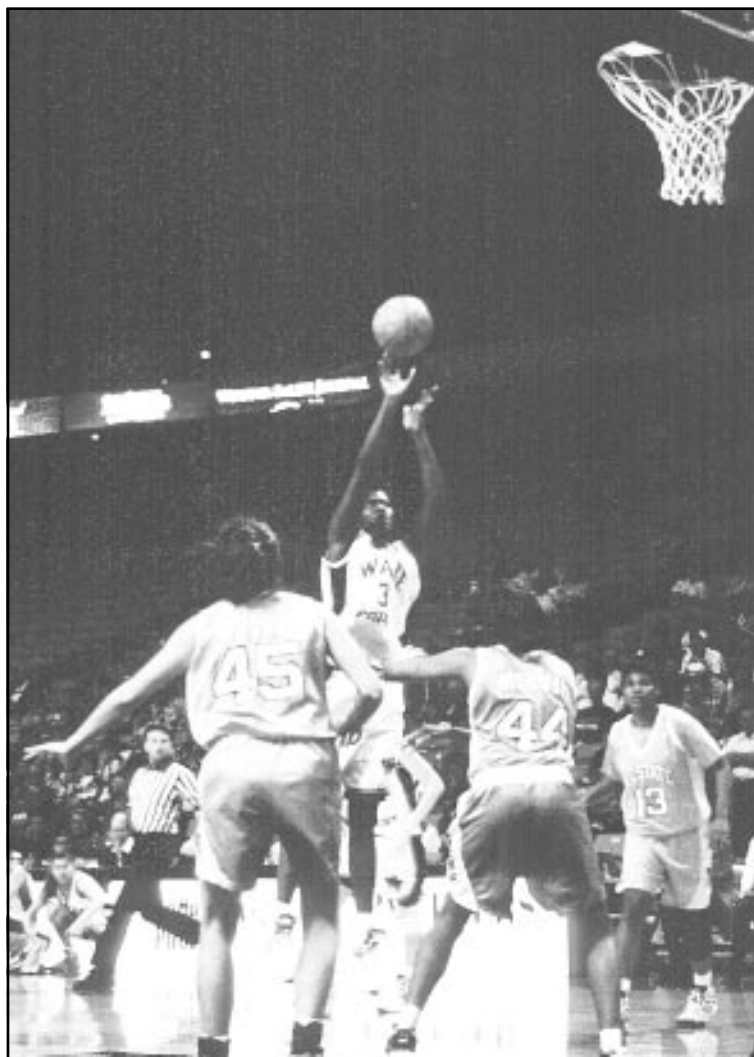
Junior All-American Tim Duncan will shine this year.

Junior Ricky Peral (above) will be a breakthrough player for the Deacon men's team this season at small forward. Senior Gretchen Hollifield (right) will contribute experience to Demon Deacon women's basketball this season at point guard.



Joe Weeks

Senior guard Rusty LaRue (above) will make a quick transition from football to hoops.



Junior Tracy Connor should be a force at center.

Deacs expect more

After winning an ACC Championship last season and earning a final ranking of three in the Associated Press poll, fans might think that the Demon Deacon men's basketball team had reached its full potential. With the extraordinary loss of Randolph Childress, '95, to the NBA, the Deacons have some big shoes to fill.

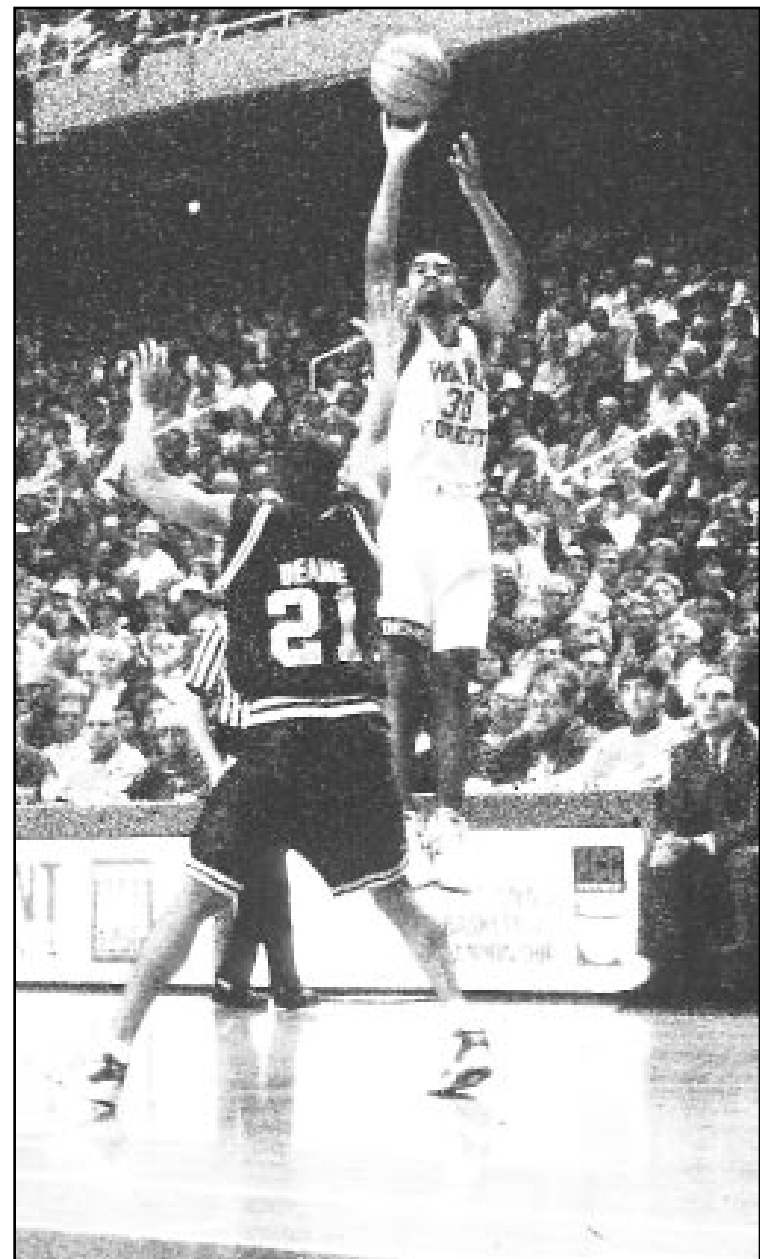
However, the expectations of the Demon Deacons this year are bigger. The preseason AP poll has the Deacons ranked No. 8 in the country. Why? Simply put, junior Tim Duncan. He is the player who is expected to take the Deacons to another ACC title; he is the player expected to lead the team farther in the NCAA Tournament than last year's Sweet 16 appearance. The Deacons finished at 26-6 overall, 12-4 in the ACC last year, and this record will be tough to repeat.

The Deacons' out-of-conference schedule is much more demanding, with big road tests coming early in the season against Oklahoma State, Massachusetts and Florida plus home matchups with Utah and St. Louis.

Duncan, 6-10, has been named the preseason national player of the year by virtually every publication. He is also the consensus ACC Player of the Year pick. Last year, the All-American was the NBC's National Defensive Player of the Year, particularly due to his shot blocking abilities. He tallied 4.2 swats per game last year, as well as tallying 12.5 rebounds a game, which marked him fifth in the nation.

This year Duncan will be even more dominant. "In the frontcourt, Duncan is a fixture," Head Coach Dave Odom said.

See the team preview, Page C2



Nick Zachos

Sophomore Tony Rutland will run the point.