

All-American Duncan is smart pick as Player of Year

By STEVE WELGOSS
SPORTS COPY EDITOR

Two years ago, sportscaster Dick Vitale was working a Demon Deacon basketball game, and during the broadcast he made mention of a freshman by the name of Tim Duncan. Watching the youngster from St. Croix, Vitale said that Duncan was a solid player who had a lot of potential, that he could become quite

like it. Browse any news stand and you will see Duncan's picture on the cover of every basketball preview magazine — even *TV Guide* has him featured. Ask any coach who the best player in the country is and they will tell you it is Duncan.

The accolades are numerous, and so are the expectations. So how does this 19-year-old superstar keep all this attention from getting to his head? By not caring about it, is how.

"I'm not trying to adjust too much," he said. "I'm just going with the flow, and I'm not going to let anything bother me. I'm just concentrating on the season."

Someone may want to check his birth certificate or his pulse. This young man is either mature beyond his years or as apathetic an individual as you will meet. Check out the list of hardware, and you would be wise choosing the former.

Duncan enters the 1995-96 season as everyone's player of the year, this after capturing third-team All-American honors by the Associated Press and National Defensive Player of the Year honors by the National Association of Basketball Coaches in 1995. He added to these honors by being named to the first-team All-ACC, first-team All-ACC Tournament and USBWA All-District teams.

Considering all of this talent, it is no wonder the Associated Press selected the Deacons as the No. 8 team in their preseason poll. On a team loaded with freshmen and sophomores, the weight of these expectations fall squarely on Duncan's wide shoulders.

However, Duncan is not intimidated by these picks, as he realizes that there is still a season full of games left to play. "It doesn't matter what they rank you during the preseason, it's where they rank you at

the end of the year," Duncan said.

While this may be an easy response to an old question, it is certainly an accurate one. With the most difficult schedule the Deacons have faced during the Dave Odom era coming this season, it appears that the team is getting ready to showcase Duncan for the nation.

"It's games like this that will help us a whole lot," he said. "We know we have to get ready and get our team together, up to what we would usually be to start at an ACC level of play."

"Mostly it's players I've played against at one point or another, so that will help me adjust a whole lot."

Mostly, though, it will be others having to adjust to Duncan. As the school's all-time leading shot-blocker, Duncan can make life very hard on opposing teams.

Taking the ball right at him is a turnover waiting to happen, because he not only has the ability to block the initial shot but to stay with

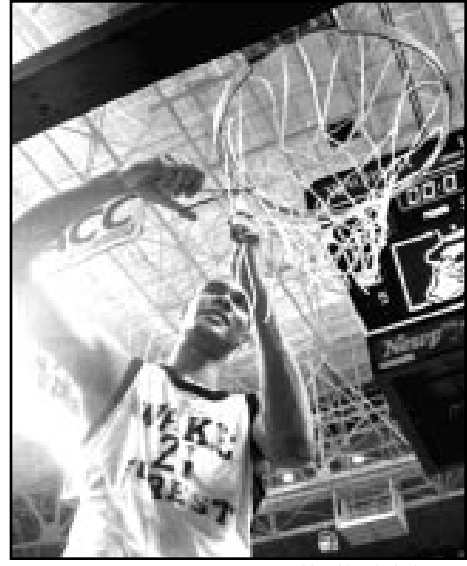
it and get the rebound as well.

With an average of 12.5 boards last season, he posted the highest mark in the ACC since 1974 and also came in fifth nationally. His 4.2 blocks per game also led the league, and this figure placed him sixth in the NCAA.

These are dazzling numbers for someone who is still just a teenager, but his experience both nationally and internationally (Duncan competed in the World University Games this summer and Goodwill Games in 1994) has made him a valuable commodity to scouts from the NBA.

Duncan has prepared himself for the onslaught of questions about jumping to the next level, though. "Bang, no comment," will be his response, indicating to all that he is concerned about making the Deacons the best team they can be, not what he has to gain.

With this man anchoring the middle and leading the way, the best they can be will be very good indeed.



Old Gold and Black photo

Duncan will look to cut the nets once more.



Old Gold and Black photo

Duncan often shows up other centers, as he did NBA rookie and former UNC star Rasheed Wallace.

a ballplayer in the future.

The future is now.

The 6-10, 242 pound Duncan is now a junior center, but center of attention is more

DUNCAN IN THE RECORDBOOKS

■ Career Totals

NCAA Career Blocked Shots

David Robinson, Navy	5.24
Shaquille O'Neal, LSU	4.58
Tim Duncan, WFU	3.98
Theo Ratliff, Wyoming	3.82
Alonzo Mourning, G'town	3.71
Dikembe Mutombo, G'town	3.69

ACC Career Blocked Shots

Ralph Sampson, UVa.	462
Tree Rollins, Clem.	450
Mike Gminski, Duke	345
Derrick Lewis, Md.	339
Elden Campbell, Clem.	334
Sharone Wright, Clem.	288

Tim Duncan, WFU 259

WFU Career Rebounds

Dickie Hemric	1802
Len Chappell	1213
Rod Griffin	947
Anthony Teachey	869
Gil McGregor	850
Ronny Watts	833
Jack Williams	751
Tim Duncan	718
Rodney Rogers	705
Guy Morgan	703

WFU Career Rebounding

Dickie Hemric	17.3
Len Chappell	13.9

Tim Duncan 11.0

Gil McGregor	10.6
Ronny Watts	10.4

WFU Career Blocked Shots

Tim Duncan	259
Anthony Teachey	203
Larry Harrison	188
Guy Morgan	182
Rod Griffin	113

WFU Career Field Goal Pct.

Jim Johnstone	.605
Rodney Rogers	.579
Tim Duncan	.573
Guy Morgan	.564
Rod Griffin	.552

LaRue will contribute long-range excellence, senior leadership

By ERIC LAW
CONTRIBUTING REPORTER

La rue is French for "the street," but LaRue for the Demon Deacons could mean the best sixth man in college basketball and a trip to the Final Four.

Senior Rusty LaRue is coming off yet another productive football season as the Demon Deacons' starting quarterback just in time for the first Deacon basketball game against Mount Saint Mary's. His NCAA record of 55 completions in one game has brought LaRue national exposure, increased acknowledgment from professional scouts and a prime time clip on ESPN. LaRue savors the spotlight and looks forward to leading the powerful hoops squad to another tremendous season.

LaRue is the only senior on a young and powerful team

with the retirement of senior Barry Canty, LaRue's good friend and classmate. LaRue lives for a challenge — fully expecting and capable of being a leader along with All-American junior Tim Duncan. With the departure of Randolph Childress, '95, LaRue's enthusiastic and demanding work ethic will lead by example as he develops into the Deacons' clutch player.

Many times last year LaRue was open for a three-pointer to win the game, like he did against Richmond when he shot a game-winning three with under 20 seconds left.

But Childress was the dominating force, and he always took control. LaRue respected Childress and never challenged his role as a leader and clutch performer. Childress is gone and this is another year, LaRue's year. This is his turn to take the shot when the game is on the line, because,

as LaRue said it best, "I've earned it."

This year's team is a different one that is younger and looks for more balanced scoring than last year. LaRue would like to start but enjoys coming off the bench. Comparisons to the beloved Marc Blucas, '94, are inevitable, and LaRue feels honored to be considered in such a light. Just like Blucas, LaRue is tenacious, a solid defender with quick hands and a potent three point threat.

But, LaRue adds, "I want to be more of a scorer." This is a typical response from a three sport legend with academic honors and a 3.2 G.P.A. in his computer science major. He is the first ACC athlete in 42 years to participate in football, basketball and baseball during the same academic year. Despite the fact that LaRue professes, "I have no real role models," he has become a role model for ACC athletes and students.

He is capable of making almost any shot on the basketball court. He can recall winning at least two games in high school with half court shots or longer, and he occasionally practices 30 to 40-foot jump shots, because, LaRue said, "You never know when you might need that shot in a game."

LaRue's goal is to average double digits in points this year. He hopes to improve on his 1994-95 statistics of scoring double digits six times, with the pinnacle being a 17 point effort against Oklahoma State in the NCAA Tournament. The Deacons will need this kind of scoring and marksman-like three-point shooting if they are to make it back to the Sweet 16 or further.

LaRue is a career 41.3 percent three-point shooter, but he will look to shoot near 50 percent from downtown as he challenges for the top spot in the ACC.

Peral primed for breakthrough

By MICKEY KRAYNYAK
ASSISTANT SPORTS EDITOR

Somewhere in between the two seasoned sophomores manning the perimeter of the Deacon basketball team and the all-everything junior under the basket, the fortunes of the 1995-96 Demon Deacons begin to grow decidedly hazy.

Sophomores Tony Rutland and Jerry Braswell seem more than ready to assume backcourt leadership responsibilities for the Demon Deacons — indeed, they seemed more than ready around the midway point of last season.

Also last year, junior Tim Duncan developed into the premier center in the country. Thus, both inside and on the perimeter, the Deacons seemed staffed to repeat as ACC Champions.

Make no mistake, though, the graduation of Scooter Banks will present the Deacons with one of the toughest obstacles they will have to face this year. The squad will sorely miss Banks' defensive prowess and upperclass savvy.

The team's most intriguing questions are thus directed to the territory not covered by Duncan, Rutland and Braswell. Specifically, will junior forward Ricky Peral be able to generate the offensive and defensive performances necessary to deflect some of the attention that opponents are likely to heap on Duncan?

After missing his freshman year because of recruiting violations, the 6-10, 230 Peral debuted last year for the Deacons and started all of the team's 32 games.

Although Peral did manage to notch 6.7 points per game and 3.6 rebounds per game for the Deacons, his greatest contribution was probably the matchup problems he created for opposing teams. Demon Deacon fans were often treated to the sight of Peral using his ample height and quickness to neutralize potentially dangerous opposing players.

As one of only a few players who possess such a combination of size and speed, Peral will again be looked to as a means of generating strategi-

cal problems for the opposition.

Offensively, Peral has the height necessary to be a low-post threat but has also demonstrated a deft touch from outside. Last season Peral hit at

evince the defensive attributes that made Peral a valuable asset last year, as well as improve his scoring and rebounding production.

Clearly, Peral's season last year



Old Gold and Black photo

Peral's perimeter shooting touch is unique for a big-man.

a rate of 60.5 percent from the floor, and was 12-of-35 (34.3 percent) from behind the three-point line.

On the defensive side of the ball, the junior also seemed to come into his own under the basket as the season progressed, as he tallied nine of his 17 blocked shots in the final 12 games of the season.

Thus, the Deacons this season will look for the junior to continue to

was an exercise in steady improvement. The Deacons hope and expect that he will continue to develop in his encore season in the ACC.

Should Peral indeed develop into a consistently important offensive threat, the sanity of opposing coaches will be strenuously tested, as the dilemma of how to contain both Duncan and Peral in the frontcourt tests the boundaries of defensive strategy.

Rutland key to Deacon backcourt, will try to fill void left by Childress

By ALEX COGSWELL
CONTRIBUTING REPORTER

Sophomore Tony Rutland has always played in the shadow of a superstar. Hailing from Hampton, Va.'s Bethel High School where he played alongside touted Georgetown sophomore Allen Iverson, and then playing his freshman campaign last season across the court from All-American point guard Randolph Childress, '95, Rutland now finds himself in a crucial position.

In this, his sophomore season, Rutland will be taking over the point guard role for the Demon Deacons, and will be expected to help relieve the pressure on pre-season ACC Player of the Year, junior Tim Duncan.

Last season Rutland shared playing time in the backcourt with sophomore Jerry Braswell, collecting 21.6 minutes per game. He started nine of the Deacons' games before mid-January, when Head Coach Dave Odom found him to be more efficient when coming off the bench. He did eventually play in all 32 games.

Rutland played most of his minutes on the wing, but occasionally played back-up at the point in the rare moments when Childress was on the bench.

For the season, Rutland shot only 32.5 percent from the field and 32 percent from three-point land, but redeemed himself by connecting on over 81 percent of his free throws. He also proved to be a very streaky shooter, and his statistics in the conference show his

ability to play under pressure.

In ACC games, his field goal mark was lifted to 37 percent, and he was dynamite from downtown, hitting 45 percent of his three-point attempts. Rutland also showed his ability to provide a real spark for the Deacons when they needed it.

He led a comeback victory against Clemson by scoring eight consecutive points and inspiring a furious second half rally. He delivered another clutch performance last season when he knocked down two free throws with seven seconds left to defeat Virginia in a crucial home victory.

Coming into last season, there were questions about Rutland's abilities on the defensive end, and he proved his critics wrong by working hard and ending up second on the team in steals behind Childress. Rutland was phenomenal in the ACC Tournament, hitting eight-of-18 three-point attempts and contributing greatly to the Deacons' success.

He also won the ACC Rookie of the Week honor when he led the Deacons to a victory over Maryland by scoring 19 points, followed by a 12 point effort in a win over Georgia Tech. The two victories came in the midst of the Deacons' 12-game winning streak, resulting in the school's first ever NCAA No. 1 seed.

This season, Rutland finds himself in a familiar role, this time playing in Duncan's shadow. However, the weight rests upon his shoulders to create production in the backcourt, and to provide a suitable replacement for number 22.

Old Gold and Black preseason picks

ACC Finish

1. Wake Forest
2. Maryland
3. Virginia
4. North Carolina
5. Georgia Tech
6. Florida State
7. Duke
8. N.C. State
9. Clemson

All-ACC

First Team

- Tim Duncan, Wake Forest
- Harold Deane, Virginia
- Todd Fuller, N.C. State
- James Collins, Florida State
- Drew Barry, Georgia Tech

Second Team

- Johnny Rhodes, Maryland
- Jeff McInnis, North Carolina

- Jeff Capel, Duke
- Curtis Staples, Virginia
- Ricky Peral, Wake Forest

Player of the Year

- Tim Duncan, Wake Forest

Rookie of the Year

- Stephon Marbury, GT