

# Duncan has sights set on conference, national titles

By MICKEY KRAYNYAK  
SPORTS EDITOR

Senior Tim Duncan walked into the pressroom at the Oct. 23 Operation Basketball media festival and promptly listened to an announcement which rendered him nearly speechless with disbelief.

ACC commissioner Gene Corrigan was reading over the microphone the results of a morning poll concerning the likely order of finish in the conference this season.

Duncan listened as team after team was called out before the Demon Deacons, and with each successive school the grimace on his face grew a little wider. For the better part of a minute, the most talented, most poised center in college basketball looked like a freshman during midterm week.

Unbeknownst to the all-everything center, of course, Duncan had entered the room just as the results from the morning's ACC basketball women's poll were being read to the crowd, and Corrigan's announcement reflected only the media's skepticism toward Demon Deacon Head Coach Karen Freeman's women's squad, not toward the team which Duncan will lead this season in pursuit of a third straight ACC Championship.

The moral of the story: Duncan and his teammates have high hopes for the 1996-97 campaign, and they earnestly believe that they can compete for both a slice of ACC history and a piece of the national championship.

As far as basketball is concerned, that is why he elected last May to return for his senior year of eligibility, and bypass his likely top selection in the NBA draft. Ask him the question a hundred different ways (and people have done so), and the answers you will get out of him effectively boil down to the reason behind

the Operation Basketball grimace. "I came back because I wanted to. I have a lot of fun being a college student," Duncan said. "We have a chance to do a lot of special things this year."

This year's Deacons have goals they wish to accomplish, and Duncan clearly wanted to be a part of them.

Just how big a part of them the 6-10, 248-pound (for those keeping track, that weight is about 10 pounds heavier than Duncan's weight last season) center will be is difficult to completely fathom.

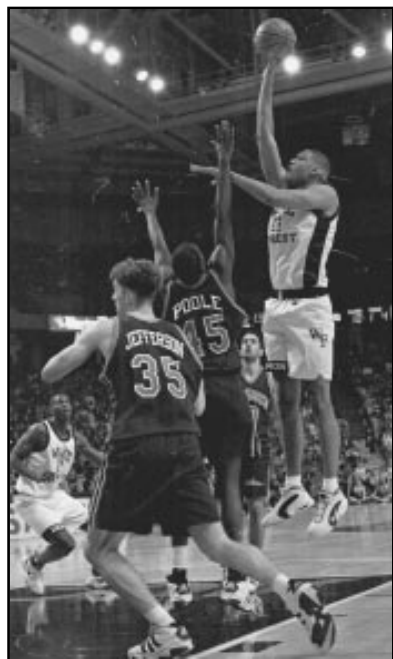
Duncan proved last season that everyone on American soil who can currently do a better job in the post than he can is making several million dollars a year. There was no one in the college ranks who could match up with his reach and timing in the paint last year, and odds are, this year will be no different.

"There's no substitute for experience," Duncan said. "It's something that we have, and we cherish it."

Last season witnessed Duncan collect ACC Player of the Year and first-team All-American honors, and dominate the ACC Tournament with 56 rebounds in three games. The pivotman averaged 19.1 points and 12.3 rebounds a game last season, pushed his career blocked shot mark to 379, and rested an average of 2.8 minutes per contest.

How polished is Duncan's defensive technique? He averaged 2.3 fouls per game last season, and did not foul out of a single contest. This despite playing the type of defense which has him first all-time among Demon Deacon shot blockers, and third on the ACC's career blocked shot list.

If the center does have a weakness, it is the difficulty he sometimes has with bulkier, stronger forwards (Sharone Wright of Clemson several



Old Gold and Black photo

**Duncan's ability to consistently score away from the basket has increased in each of his seasons.**

years ago, Louisville's Samaki Walker in last season's Sweet 16) or quicker, finesse-style centers (Massachusetts' Marcus Camby.)

Enter Duncan's peers. Both seniors Sean Allen and Ricky Peral will return to start again in the Deacon frontcourt, and both forwards possess the type of defensive prowess and savvy which funnels attention away from Duncan.

The speedy 6-10 Peral excels at making open jump shots evaporate, and Allen is a bookend on the other side of the big man. The Deacons' 1996-97 attack will also feature 7-1 freshman center Loren Woods, whose size and agility will serve to spell both Peral and Allen, and to deflect attention away from Duncan in the process.

"I think we will be improved. We're a different team this year. I believe you'll be surprised by what we do," Duncan said.

Unlike other recently dominant, post-up big men in college basketball (George Washington's Yinka Dare, LSU's Shaquille O'Neal) Duncan is surrounded with enough talent to ensure that he will not need to venture far from the paint, and that fact bodes markedly ill for opponents' field goal shooting percentages.

Not that Duncan needs much attention deflected from him. With the graduation of N.C. State's Todd Fuller, the ACC lost the only center it had who can begin to handle Duncan in the paint, and one has to strain to find any center in the conference this season who looks able to handle Duncan's array of skills.

The center remains reluctant, however, to discuss his team's prospects in the ACC or national tournaments this early in the season.

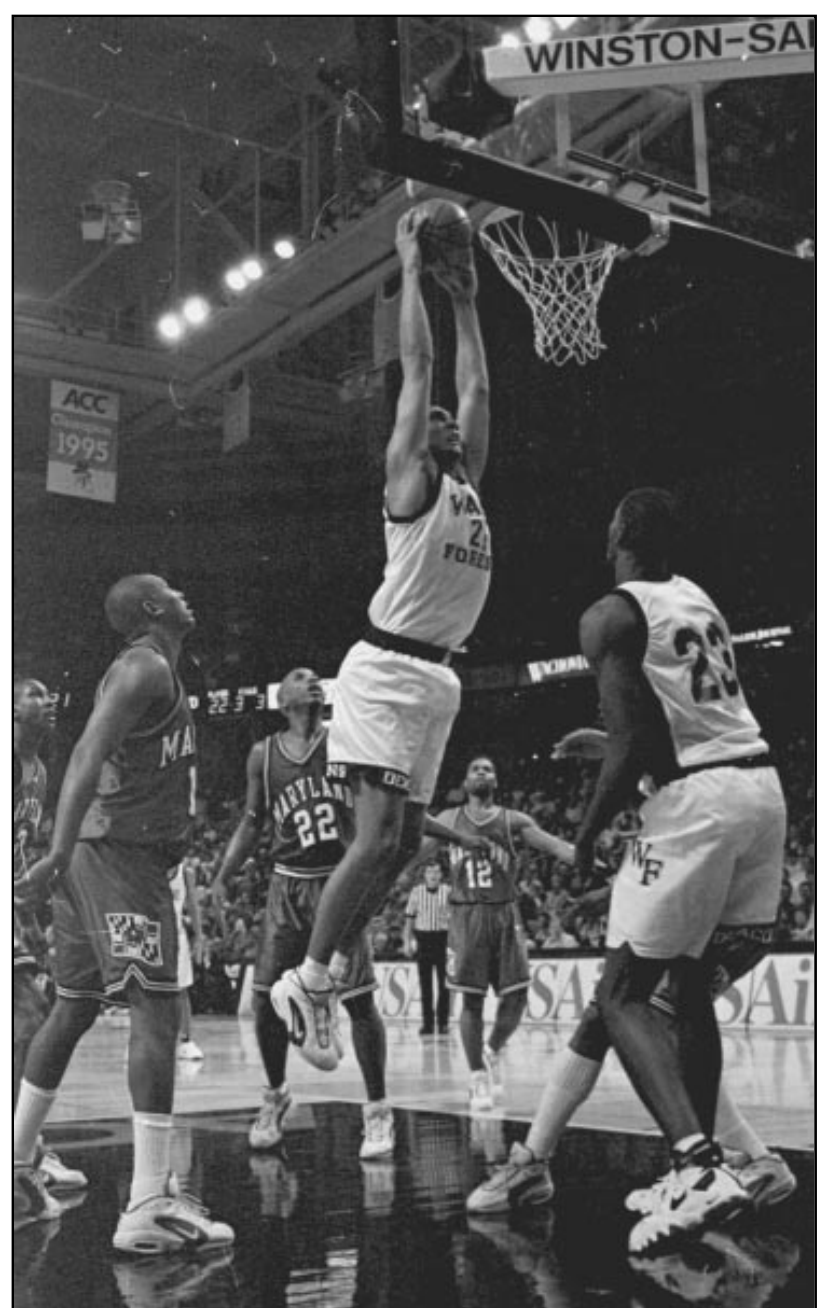
"I think it's a little early to talk about that. We're not going to win the Final Four today, or this week," Duncan said.

Statistics and matchup predictions, however, do not begin to express all of the advantages Duncan gives the Deacons.

The center's trademark play (if he has one) is remarkably subtle, and equally valuable: though he blocks what seems like every other shot he faces, Duncan tends not to swat balls into the fifth and sixth rows of the crowd. Rather, his blocks usually fall back into the center's waiting hands, and thus effectively close the book on opponents' possessions.

Such is the stuff of heady basketball, and heady basketball is Duncan's specialty.

Heady basketball and ACC championships, that is.



Old Gold and Black photo

The return of senior Tim Duncan has Deacon fans flying high.

## Deacons eagerly anticipating further emergence of Peral

By PAUL GAETA  
ASSISTANT SPORTS EDITOR

A 6-10 basketball player who is a force both in the paint and on the perimeter is a rare find. The Demon Deacons have found one, however, in senior Ricky Peral.

Peral, a senior from Valladolid, Spain, is a threat from anywhere on the floor. As a small forward last year, he shot 51 percent from behind the three point arc, second in the nation and first in the ACC.

However, his talent is not limited to the outside. He is competent on the glass as his 4.3 rebounds a game last year indicated.

"That's my only advantage," said Peral when asked how being a 6-10 small forward with so many talents on the floor helps his game. "I'm very tall for what I do, but I can still do it. It's such an advantage in itself."

After a mediocre start to last year's season, Peral's game progressed greatly in the final month, especially in the NCAA Tournament. In the Demon Deacons' first-round game against Northeast Louisiana, Peral attained his first double-double when he scored 14 points and grabbed 11 rebounds. He then scored 16, 11, and 13 points respectively in the Deacons' final three games against Texas, Louisville, and eventual champion Kentucky. He ended the tournament shooting just under 70 percent from the floor, including eight of 11 from behind the arc.

Peral's late-season success has garnered much confidence for this upcoming year. "The end of last year gives me the knowledge that I can do things well and that it will eventually help me," he said.

Confidence alone, however, will not be the only thing Peral lets carry his game to the next level this year. This summer, Peral worked hard to improve his game. The most significant experience he had was his participation on the Under-22 Spanish National Team.

The team practiced daily and played in several tournaments against other national teams. The rewards for having been united with such an exceptional team are many, according to Peral.

"Playing basketball during the summer gave me a chance to do things I usually don't do here such as different things with different competition," he said. "It was a positive experience."

With a somewhat weak back court Peral sees his role this year to be very similar to that of last; a player who spends most of his time on the perimeter but, when needed, will be a force in the paint.

"I think it's going to be the same as last year," Peral said of his role this season. "I will play outside until I'm

needed inside. I'm going to be a rebounder, defender, and scorer."

The senior sees his years with senior Tim Duncan as having greatly benefitted his college career.

"That's the reason I made 51 percent of my three-pointers, because no one guards me," Peral said. "They go guard Tim, and I am alone to shoot it myself."

Peral knows the team has what it takes to do well, especially when one looks at their experience together.

"It doesn't really feel like pre-season," he said of the team's chemistry.

"Usually, you have some really lousy practices, and a lot of bad things happen because you don't really know each other. That hasn't happened this year," the Demon Deacon continued.

"This plays to our advantage because we can have more advanced practices."



Old Gold and Black photo

**While senior Ricky Peral is better known for his three point shooting, he does have the ability to take the ball to the hoop.**

## Defensive prowess makes Allen key member of forward rotation

By ZACH EVERSON  
ASSISTANT NEWS EDITOR

Although not as flashy or as well-known as some of his counterparts on the Demon Deacons front line, senior Sean Allen is just as important to the team's chances of repeating the success of recent years.

Stability and consistency are two of the best words that can be used to describe Allen. His contribution on the defensive end transcends statistics, as he is often given some of the toughest assignments on the floor. It was his task, for example, to guard National Player of the Year Marcus Camby in last year's Deacon loss to Massachusetts.

Allen is in an unusual position for a college forward, in that at 6-8 he is the smallest Deacon likely to receive a lot of playing time on the front line. The squad has exceptionally tall forwards/centers as seniors Tim Duncan and Ricky Peral measure in at 6-10 while freshman Loren Woods is the tall man of the group at 7-1.

Allen, however, does not feel intimidated by not measuring up heightwise with his teammates. "You get to see what a gift it is to be as tall as Tim and Ricky are," Allen said, adding that he just tries to do the best with what God gave him.

Allen sees his experience and leadership (especially at the defensive end) as two of his greatest assets on the court. He also feels that he does a solid job of relaying Head Coach Dave Odom's vision to the other players on the floor.

According to Allen, his shooting is the most improved aspect of his game from last season. One of his goals for this season is to be more willing to shoot. That will be important, as other teams will surely be double teaming Duncan, thereby leaving Allen a lot of open looks at the basket.

Allen expects the squad to continue its recent trend of success on the court. The team has not changed anything and it is still sticking with what helped it achieve its success in the first place, he said.

"I expect us to do good things as long as we're playing hard," Allen said.

At the end of the season, Allen wants to say that he played to the best of his ability and gave the team a chance to win.

Despite being a senior, this year will only be Allen's second on the squad. He began his college career playing for South Florida before transferring to Anderson Junior College in South Carolina.

He landed here in the middle of the 1994-95 campaign, but was redshirted.

Last season he averaged 5.9 points and 5.1 rebounds, while starting in 28 of the 32 games.

Allen's best game last year, offensively speaking, oc-



Old Gold and Black photo

**The defensive contribution of senior Sean Allen is an important factor in the Deacons' quest to win a third straight ACC title.**

curred in the Deacon victory against Duke in February when he scored 15 points.

His other double-digit scoring game occurred against Florida State when he contributed 10 points to the Deacons' cause.

His rebounding high came just a few weeks later when he pulled down 11 boards in the Deacons' triumph over North Carolina.

Allen did not take the summer off, as he spent time improving his game and preparing for this season. "I played during the summer in Raleigh in a summer league," Allen said.

## Expectations loom large for only new recruit, 7-1 Loren Woods

By ANDY SISK  
OLD GOLD AND BLACK REPORTER

Make way for the new big man on campus, freshman Loren Woods.

The sole freshman recruit towers over his teammates and campus at just over seven feet. As the only freshman that Head Coach David Odom signed from last year's recruiting class, Woods knows the expectations for him are high.

If his high school and junior play is any indication, Woods should be up to the challenge. As a senior at Cardinal Ritter High School in St. Louis, he led his team to its second straight state championship, averaging over 21 points and 13 rebounds per game. He also left as Cardinal Ritter's all-time shot

blocker with 501 career swats. His efforts landed him a spot on the USA Junior National squad and on the McDonald's High School All-America team. He is the first Demon Deacon to receive that honor since Rodney Rogers.

That was high school, and Woods knows that that level of play pales in comparison to the almighty ACC. The chance to play in the ACC was one of the main reasons he chose the Demon Deacon program over the likes of Temple, Syracuse and Connecticut, although Woods said it was not the primary reason.

"I was looking at academics first because I know that basketball will take care of itself," he said. "After academics, I looked at the conference and then the program."

The chance to play the role of understudy to

premier big man senior Tim Duncan was another key factor in Woods' decision.

"That was also definitely one of the reasons I chose Wake," he said, adding that Duncan has taught him some things already.

"I'm glad he didn't go to the NBA. If he'd have gone to the NBA, I probably wouldn't be as far along as I am now," he said. "I thought I made an excellent choice for my situation."

When asked about the biggest difference between high school and college, Woods cited the increased workloads both on and off the court.

"It's been challenging, especially the amount of class work compared to high school, but I don't think I'm in over my head," he said. "The same is true for basketball. There is a lot of individual work in the weight room,

and instead of just two or three players being good on your team, everybody's good."

Woods is quick not to make any decisions as far as his team role and a potential twin tower with Duncan, preferring to leave that up to the coaching staff.

"I am just going to try and help out in any way that I can," he said. "Whenever I get in (the game), I'll play as hard as I can."

The freshman could see significant playing time, especially since he is the only member of this year's recruiting class. Woods said that when he found out about the lack of other recruits, he was a little concerned for the team's future.

"I had heard that there would be two others coming in. When I got here and found out that I was the only one signed, it just made me

think what's going to happen in the future," he said. "I am not worried, though."

Woods said at this time he plans to stay all four years and graduate, but he wouldn't rule out leaving early for the NBA if he felt that was the correct decision for him.

"I hope to stay here and graduate, but I don't hold anything against those guys who go to the NBA. Everybody's situation is different, and I think if somebody is ready then he should do what he thinks is right."

Woods said he is enjoying his first semester on campus. When asked whether anything about the university has surprised him, the seven-footer singled out his teachers.

"I have been happily surprised at how friendly the teachers have been," he said. "They have really tried to help me out."