

# Demon Deacons begin new era under Prosser

*Five seniors and two juniors give the new head coach an experienced and talented core*

By Jordan Webster  
Sports Editor

A cursory glance at last season's Demon Deacons reveals a team that won its first 12 games and climbed as high as No. 4 in both national polls. The Deacs routed a third-ranked Kansas team, nearly knocked off eventual national champion Duke, and made its first NCAA tournament appearance in four years.

Five of last season's top six scorers return for the 2001-02 season, and the Demon Deacons' best recruiting class in three years will supplement an experienced squad that includes five seniors and two juniors. Add a transfer assassin from behind the three-point line, and it would appear that Head Coach Skip Prosser's transition from Xavier would be smooth and largely uneventful.

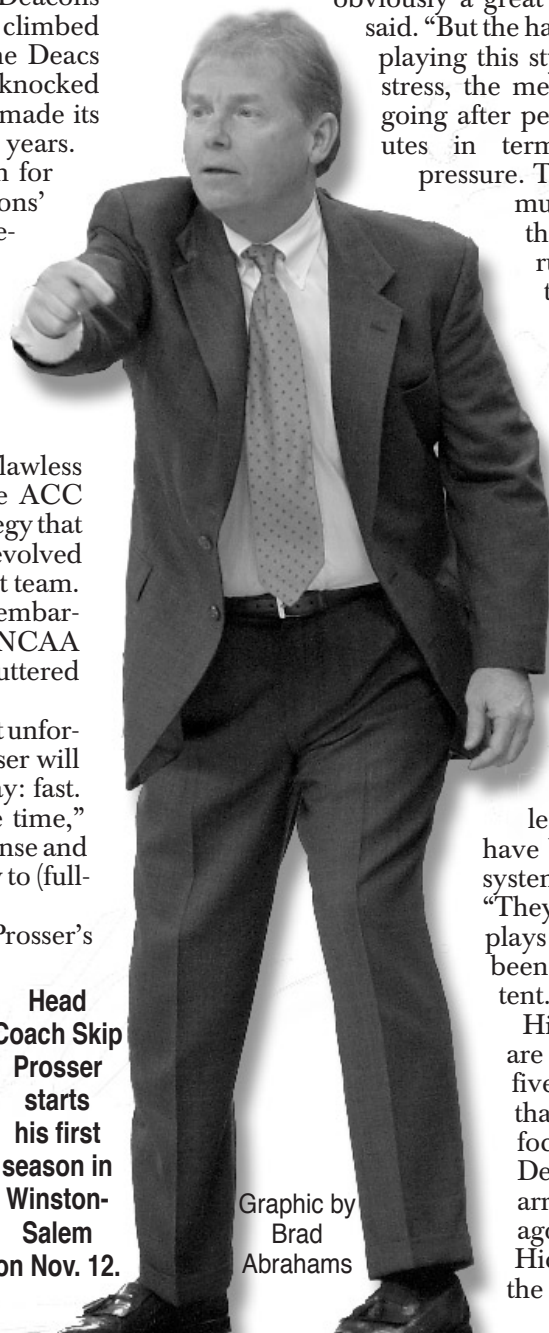
Looks can be deceiving. Last year's team also went 7-11 after that flawless 12-0 start. That team stumbled through the ACC season. It deviated from an early-season strategy that stressed the fast break and easy baskets, and devolved into a monotonous and often inept half-court team. Its second-half digression culminated in an embarrassing loss to Butler in the first round of the NCAA Tournament, a game in which the offense sputtered to only 10 first-half points.

It's that second-half slide, an occurrence that unfortunately has come to be the norm, that Prosser will be looking to reverse. And he'll do it his way: fast. "We want our guys thinking attack all the time," Prosser said. "Pressure offense, pressure defense and pressure in the backcourt. "We're going to try to (full-court press). We're going to try (to run)."

It was this constant pressure that propelled Prosser's Xavier Musketeers to six 20-win seasons in seven years, three NCAA appearances, and truckloads of forced turnovers. And it's the same style that Prosser wants to see run by his experienced, athletic Demon Deacon team, hopefully with the same results. But just because seniors Antwan Scott and Broderick Hicks, junior Josh Howard and freshman Jamaal Levy, among others, seem ideally suited for a 40-minute track meet, athleticism is hardly the sole determinant of success; in fact,

Prosser stresses the mental aspect of maintaining a pressing, uptempo style for a full game.

"You see a guy who can run and dunk, and he's obviously a great athlete," Prosser said. "But the hardest thing about playing this style is the mental stress, the mental demands of going after people for 40 minutes in terms of full-court pressure. That adaptation is much more crucial than being able to run and jump, and that part of athleticism, I think, is somewhat underplayed."



Head Coach Skip Prosser starts his first season in Winston-Salem on Nov. 12.

Graphic by Brad Abrahams

According to Prosser, though, it has been his two captains, Hicks and senior forward Darius Songaila, that are picking up his system best.

"They've been very good leaders for us, and have bought in (to the system)" Prosser said. "They've had their misplays at times but have been pretty consistent."

Hicks and Songaila are two of the team's five seniors, a group that has been the focal point of the Deacons since its arrival three years ago. The 6-foot-1 Hicks will receive the majority of the

minutes at point guard. Songaila, last season's second leading scorer, has been in the starting lineup since his freshman season, and will be the Deacs' only typical inside player, at 6-foot-9, 248 pounds.

And although Prosser insists that the mental aspect of his scheme is more challenging than the physical aspect, he still needs the horses to run the race. Luckily the stable is stocked with athletes that had been underutilized under former Head Coach Dave Odom.

Two other seniors, Craig Dawson and Scott, will likely join Hicks and Songaila among the starting five. Dawson, a guard, does much of his damage from the perimeter - he knocked down 38 percent of his three-pointers last season. Scott, an offensive standout, never fit the mold of lumbering, physical interior defenders that Odom favored, and playing time came in spurts. Ironically, Scott could be a perfect fit for Prosser; at 6-foot-8, he will likely be positioned on the opposition's inbounder following Deacon baskets, as he was in their 108-65 exhibition romp over Nike Elite on Nov. 2, where his enormous reach will give other teams fits.

Junior Josh Howard, who led the Deacons last season in scoring with 13.6 points per game, will be the fifth starter, and while he will begin at the small forward slot, he will see time at both shooting guard and power forward. The versatile 6-foot-6 Howard also fits the physical mold of a player destined to thrive under Prosser's tutelage.

First off the bench for Prosser will probably be junior Steve Lepore, a transfer from Northwestern. The team's fifth senior, Ervin Murray, will also see time at multiple positions. Odom used the 6-foot-5 Murray primarily as a point guard; under Prosser, Murray will see time at small forward as well.

Sophomore A.W. Hamilton will provide depth at point guard, and a trio of freshmen - forwards Levy and Vytas Danelius and guard Taron Downey - will also see action, although to what extent is yet to be determined. Redshirt freshman center Dshamal Schoetz tore his ACL several days after practice started, and will miss the entire season.

With the foul-plagued Songaila the only true inside player for Prosser, rebounding will be a team effort.

"It's a huge concern, but there's not a lot we can do about it," he said. "We can't bring anybody up from Triple A, and (there aren't) any free agents out there running around, so you've got to go with what you've got."

## Demon Deacons



Head Coach: Skip Prosser

Career Record: 165-78

Record at Wake: 0-0

2000-01 Record: 19-11

2000-01 ACC Finish: 8-8, T-Fifth

Returning Starters: 3

## 2001-2002 Roster

No.	Name	Pos.	Cl.	No.	Name	Pos.	Cl.
3	Broderick Hicks	G	Sr.	31	Ervin Murray	G/F	Sr.
4	Taron Downey	G	Fr.	33	Steve Lepore	G	Jr.
5	Josh Howard	F	Jr.	34	Antwan Scott	F	Sr.
10	Jamaal Levy	F	Fr.	42	Craig Dawson	G	Sr.
11	A.W. Hamilton	G	So.	53	Dshamal Schoetz	C	r-Fr.
13	Vytas Danelius	F	Fr.		Brett Hickman	F	Sr.
25	Darius Songaila	F	Sr.		Alan Williams	G	So.
					Walt Chancellor	G	So.

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