

Carolina Blues? 'Heels searching for scoring

Tar Heels leaning on Capel, Lang for leadership, points; status of Peppers and Curry a question

By Mike Scott
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"Go to hell Carolina, go to hell!" is a familiar refrain heard by North Carolina players at opposing arenas. After the end of last season, the Tar Heels may need to start thinking about playing on Sundays a little less, and going to church on Sundays a little more.

North Carolina's season finished on an evil note, as the 'Heels suffered losses on three straight Sabbaths to fall into the fiery pits of an early off-season. While their final contest came in a loss to Penn State in the second round of the NCAA Tournament, many people felt that Carolina's season was over after losing to Duke on the previous two Sundays in the finales of the ACC regular season and the conference tournament.

Were they returning their entire team, which was ranked No. 1 for much of the season, there would still be serious questions about whether this team would be able to challenge the Blue Devils after falling by a combined 40 points in those final two meetings.

But after losing their star players from last year, Joseph Forte and Brendan Haywood, to the NBA draft, the question this year is not whether they will to challenge for the ACC title. Instead, the question this year is whether the 'Heels will finish lower than third in the conference for the first time in over 30 years.

"We know where people are picking us in the league, whether it's fourth or even lower than fourth," second-year Head Coach Matt Doherty said. "I can understand



Courtesy of UNC Media Relations

Senior forward Kris Lang will be looked to for additional scoring and senior leadership.

why people are doing that; we've lost a lot and we have inexperienced players coming in.

"But it's definitely motivation for us. I think our players, especially our seniors, are looking forward to trying to prove a lot of people wrong."

The fears of many fans came to fruition in the 'Heels' 107-76 loss – yes, *loss* – to the EA Sports All-Stars – yes, the *EA Sports All-Stars* – in their first exhibition game. While Carolina was without the services of senior Jason Capel, it was still a 31-point loss in an exhibition game.

The most pressing concern entering the year is how the team will find a replacement for Forte, who left after his sophomore season. In Forte, Doherty had one of the best players in the country, that rare person who, when a basket was needed, could almost always deliver. But Doherty sees a possible gain in this loss.

"You're not going to replace Joe Forte," he said. "I think Joe was obviously one of the best players in the country last year, being a first team All-American. You hope that a guy like (seniors) Jason (Capel) or Kris (Lang) can get your big baskets and maybe it's a Brian Morrison, maybe it's a freshman, who knows.

"Maybe it's by committee, and maybe that's a good thing. Maybe coming out of the huddle at the end of the game the other coach can't say, 'alright, let's double team Joe Forte.' Well, they've got to play everybody honestly, and then you've got a couple options."

Lang and Capel, the only two sure returning starters from last year, will provide the experience and leadership that comes with being four-year starters. Capel, for one, thinks he knows who will be Forte's replacement as the team's go-to guy.

"I think it'll be more of a team thing, but I think I'll be the focal point of that," Capel said when asked who would pick up the scoring load. "It's something I've done, something I've proven."

Another big question comes, oddly enough, due to the success of UNC's football team. Last year's starting point guard and back up power forward are both unavoidably detained at the moment, as juniors Ronald Curry and Julius Peppers star for the gridiron 'Heels. While no one knows whether the pair will return to the floor this year, their services will not be available until January at the earliest. This leaves the starting spot at the point guard position wide open.

"I think right now it's three: it's (sophomore) Adam (Boone), (junior) John Holmes and (freshman) Melvin Scott," Doherty said. "I've kind of put (sophomore) Brian Morrison at the two, although I wouldn't ever rule him out playing the point. At certain times during the game don't be surprised to see him get the outlet and go up the court with it. He's almost like a second point guard on the floor when he's on the floor."

No matter who plays point, the Tar Heels will have a much newer, and much younger, look on the floor



Courtesy of UNC Media Relations

Head Coach Matt Doherty will have to replace NBAers Joseph Forte and Brendan Haywood in the Tar Heel lineup.

this year. With highly-touted freshmen Jawad Williams and Jackie Manuel expected to see much playing time, the 'Heels will have to have significant contributions from youngsters this year. While Doherty is not yet set on his starting lineup, Capel seems confident that Williams will be in it.

"I expect him to contribute a lot," Capel said of Williams. "I expect all three of the freshmen to contribute a lot. Jawad will probably be our starting three man. He's really stepped up at the small forward position.

"He's a good player – 6-foot-9, very long, very athletic. I think he needs to work on his intensity, playing hard and working hard every day at practice and once he does that he'll become a great player."

Add to that the loss of Haywood, a seven-footer, creating the need for Capel and Lang to play one spot higher up in the lineup than last year, and the Tar Heels will also be playing a completely new style from last year's slower, half-court set.

"We're changing into the style that everyone else is changing into in the ACC, up tempo," Lang said. "The five-man is really a legit four man, so everyone moves very quickly. And North Carolina is traditionally known for its big four- and five-man, half-court offense, but now it's strictly an up-and-down game."

So for the first time in seemingly forever, North Carolina enters a basketball season not knowing who will provide the scoring, with a new style of play and with their place of dominance in the ACC in doubt.

In order to avoid the basketball version of Purgatory, they'll need to answer all these questions and more.

North Carolina Tar Heels



Head Coach: Matt Doherty

Career Record: 48-22

Record at UNC: 26-7

2000-01 Record: 26-7

2000-01 ACC Finish: 13-3, T-First

Returning Starters: 3

2001-2002 Roster

No.	Name	Pos.	Cl.
1	Melvin Scott	G	Fr.
3	Brian Morrison	G	So.
5	Jackie Manuel	G	Fr.
13	Neil Fingleton	C	r-Fr.
14	Jonathan Holmes	G	Jr.
21	Jawad Williams	F	Fr.
22	Ronald Curry	G	Jr.

25	Jason Capel	F	Sr.
31	Adam Boone	G	So.
32	Orlando Melendez	F	Sr.
42	Kris Lang	F/C	Sr.
44	Will Johnson	F	Jr.
45	Julius Peppers	F	Jr.
50	Brian Bersticker	F/C	Gr.