

# Curtis' crew sets sights on the postseason

By **Trey Kalny**  
*Old Gold and Black Reporter*

In Head Coach Charlene Curtis' office, she has a motivational book that the coach has given to each of her incoming freshman to prepare them for their first season of Division I college basketball.

In essence the book is a parallel to the 2003-04 Wake Forest women's basketball team: it foretells good times, it warns about the inevitable misfortunes and it has colorful illustrations. The book is *Dr. Seuss' Oh, the Places You'll Go!*.

This year's Deacons look to improve on a mediocre showing last year in which they finished 13-15. After winning several games in the early part of the season, last year's squad had some problems down the stretch but still managed to give Duke, the eventual ACC Champs, a run for its money in two out of three games.

However, simply improving on last year's record will not be enough for this squad - the team has set its sights on post-season play.

"We are working hard to try

and finish in the top half of the conference," junior Jennifer Johnson said. "We know that this would give us a better opportunity for post-season play and that's something that the women's program hasn't done in a while. We feel that's definitely a goal we can reach."

This team will be very different from years past in which talented backcourts were the key to the Deacons' fortunes. The talent at the post positions has added another aspect to Wake Forest's game. With the graduation of forward Tiffani Listenbee, junior Erin Ferrell and sophomores Liz Strunk and Keila Evans will be expected to contribute immediately.

"Our post players must find a way to contribute in order to provide the inside aspect of our game," Curtis said. "They will give us size, rebounds, and an inside presence that has been missing in years past."

Unlike the finesse game that Listenbee possessed, Ferrell, Strunk and Evans are aggressive players who will give the team true inside post play.

Despite the importance of

the frontcourt game, seniors Tracy Alston, Bianca Brown and Tonia Brown will play a large role in the team's success this year.

"I expect the seniors to set the tone both on and off the floor this year," she said. "These girls want to be the class that gets the school back to postseason play, and they have to be the ones to make it happen."

The Deacs will also look for the continued development of sophomore guard Cotelia Bond-Young, who averaged 9.9 points per game as a freshman last year, making her the team's second-leading returning scorer.

One intangible advantage the Deacs feel they have this year is solid team chemistry.

"We all are very close," junior Meredith Bell said. "As a junior, I have to say that it is by far the closest I have ever seen our team come together. The key is, though, remaining together throughout the season - that is the true test of our chemistry and desire to win."

Playing in the ACC does present a major challenge for the Deacons, as it is one of the

toughest conferences in women's college basketball. Featuring defending ACC champion Duke as well as North Carolina and Virginia, who have preseason national rankings of 14th and 24th respectively, the ACC is tough. Curtis has focused primarily on the mental aspect of the game during this off-season and hopes that it will pay off when pressure situations arise.

"This team has said that it wants to make the post-season, but to do that we must play every game like it matters and not let wins get away from us like we did last year," Curtis said.

When playing in a tough conference like the ACC, Curtis stresses that the team cannot afford to pay attention to everything that is going on around the conference, but instead must focus on themselves.

"As a team we have to remember to take things one game at a time and must concentrate on the fine points of the game: making free throws, rebounding, playing defense and taking care of the basketball," Curtis said. "This year we have to

make things happen as opposed to letting things happen."

Making matters worse is the strength of schedule that the Deacons face. Wake Forest plays preseason No. 9 Purdue Nov. 29 as well as Marshall, Hampton and Holy Cross, all teams that were in the NCAA tournament a season ago.

In order to secure a post-season berth, the team must have a winning record. Wake Forest has not gone to a post-season tournament in women's basketball since 1989.

Nevertheless, the players remain optimistic about their chances. "I have a great feeling about this year and this team, and once we get everything together and focus on us, we can't be broken," Alston said.

As the women's basketball team hopes to add a new chapter to the history of Wake Forest athletics, Dr. Seuss' book seems to be a roadmap to the season ahead.

With new talent, veteran leadership and improved coaching, a trip to the postseason could very likely be one of the many places the Deacons will go to in 2003-04.

## Editors' Season Predictions

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### ACC Standings

- Duke
- Wake Forest
- North Carolina
- N.C. State
- Florida State
- Maryland
- Virginia
- Clemson
- Georgia Tech

### First Team All-ACC

- Raymond Felton  
*UNC*
- Tim Pickett  
*Florida State*
- Julius Hodge  
*N.C. State*
- Jamaal Levy  
*Wake Forest*
- Shavlik  
*Randolph*
- Randolph  
*Duke*

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- Raymond Felton  
*UNC*
- John Gilchrist  
*Maryland*
- Julius Hodge  
*N.C. State*
- Chris Duhon  
*Duke*
- Vytas Danelius  
*Wake Forest*

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*Wake Forest*
- Julius Hodge  
*N.C. State*
- Shavlik  
*Randolph*
- Randolph  
*Duke*
- Sean May  
*UNC*

### ACC Player of the Year

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