

# ★ ★ ★ Chris Ellis ★ ★ ★

By Peter Bergman

Old Gold and Black Reporter

The 2003-2004 basketball season began ominously for sophomore forward Chris Ellis, with a fluke injury in the Demon Deacons' first practice of the season.

Ellis broke the fifth metatarsal in his right foot during one of Head Coach Skip Prosser's famous rebounding drills and will be out six to 12 weeks, depending on how well the bone heals.

Ellis, a 6-foot-9-inch power forward from Marietta, Ga., came in last season and surprised many with his low-post defense and his shooting percentage, which was above 50 percent. He was set to log serious minutes in the Deacon frontcourt this season, until the setback due to injury.

Don't count him out just yet, though, because Ellis knows what it is going to take to be ready to contribute when he rejoins the team in mid-season.

"The biggest thing I am going to have to focus on is getting in shape, being in top physical

condition," Ellis said. "I have been off for so long, I haven't played in a month, so when this heals I have to have myself in top condition to be ready."

Ellis finished his freshman year with averages of 2.8 points and 2.5 rebounds per game, but he was an extremely unselfish player who excelled at playing tough interior defense and nearly-mistake-free offense (only 17 turnovers in 31 games).

"I got in and played some defense, hustled a lot and did what I had to do," Ellis said. "I have to step it up this year, though, and take it to the next level."

An early season matchup with No. 23 Wisconsin was where Ellis first made his mark. Starting center Eric Williams got into foul trouble, and Prosser looked to Ellis to fill the gap. Ellis responded with outstanding defense down the stretch and six points on 3-of-4 shooting.

Other standout performances for Ellis included a career-high 14 points against Bethune-Cookman, and 10 rebounds in a win against Georgia Tech.

Despite these solid outings, the season made him hungrier to do more, and he looked toward the summer to make himself better.

Ellis is no stranger to hard work and dedication and he worked hard to improve his game.

"I worked on my touch around the basket, my shooting and my dribbling a little bit, and my ability to run the court well," Ellis said.

With such a young team once again this season - the Deacs have no scholarship seniors - Ellis has also been forced to take on a leadership role. This became even more important when he was injured and two freshmen on the front line, forwards Kyle Visser and Todd Hendley, were thrust into more important roles.

"I try to coach (Hendley and Visser) a little on the sidelines," Ellis said. "Everybody puts their part in, when someone is down we all try to lift them up. We're just a big family."

It is this team-first attitude that could make Ellis and the Deacs special this year.

However, Ellis also believes

that it is the team's diversity and depth that could make them dangerous.

"I think we are going to have a good chance at doing some big things this year," he said. "We've got a lot of young talent, a lot of old

talent, with people coming off the bench and people starting, so we are going to come at you in a lot of different ways."

The Deacs will always have a talented team on the floor, but as last year's undefeated home record will tell you, the fans can have a big influence on the game. Last season the Joel Coliseum

became one of the hardest places to play in the ACC, a far cry from years past. The players appreciate the fan support, and Ellis is no exception.

"Our fans, they love us," he says. "I like those

## Chris Ellis



**Hometown:**

Marietta, Ga.

**Year:** sophomore

**Height:** 6'9"

**Weight:** 265 lbs.

**Position:** Forward

**2002-03 PPG:** 2.8

crazy, die-hard fans. They have been there through thick and thin, camping out and missing class for tickets. That's the kind of people we need coming to the games."

# ★ ★ ★ Richard Joyce ★ ★ ★

By Don Pogoda

Old Gold and Black Reporter

After experiencing tendonitis in his knee his junior year in high school, sophomore Richard Joyce has had to develop physical toughness in addition to honing his basketball skills.

Joyce has played with many basketball stars including Carmelo Anthony of the Denver Nuggets, Chadd Moore of Cincinnati and Eric Willins of Miami. Playing at Mount Airy High School in North Carolina helped him mature as a basketball player, and having his senior season at Oak Hill Academy in Virginia gave him even more experience while improving his skills.

These opportunities have aided Joyce with his transition to Division I competition.

"It is a lot more intense and physical because the guys are bigger, stronger and faster," Joyce said. "The intensity picks up, you have to run, run, run and play defense."

Joyce is appreciative to be playing at Wake Forest and is excited every time he steps on the floor.

"It's a great feeling when your name is called or when you make a shot," Joyce said. "When everybody starts cheering, you can't describe the feeling."

Now a sophomore, Joyce had the

chance to play on last year's ACC Regular Season Championship squad as a freshman.

He observed All-American Josh Howard and learned a great deal from his experience.

"I learned more how to be a leader and how to help out the younger guys this year, along with developing a stronger work ethic," Joyce said. "We are a family and without a family bond we aren't able to achieve our goals; we have to stick together and work hard."

Joyce saw action in 19 of the 31 games last season and is looking to increase his playing time after a productive off-season.

"I worked on so many aspects of my game, including dropping my weight from 215 to 200 pounds to increase my athleticism," Joyce said. "I got into shape and worked on my shot everyday along with my ball handling; I just did everything possible to get more playing time this year."

Joyce is optimistic about the season because of the number of guys returning from last year's team.

"We have a bunch of guys back and that helps our bond," he said. "Everybody here wants to make everybody else better, and that is only going to help the team improve and allow us to achieve our goals."

Joyce is also impressed with the amount of school spirit at Wake Forest and hopes for it to continue throughout the season.

"(The) fans are great and I appreciate everything (they) do for everybody," Joyce said. "I can't describe that feeling when everybody is screaming our names and jumping up and down. (They) give us the energy when we get tired and I just want to thank (them)."

Motivation is a key in basketball, and Joyce remembers what it took to get through his tendonitis. He keeps himself motivated intrinsically but is also inspired by Head Coach Skip Prosser.

"(Prosser) always has words of wisdom and goes out of his way to pick us up when we are down," Joyce said. "He always has a little speech or something to fire us up for each game, but all the coaches do a great job as well to get us ready."

Getting fired up is important for each game and that motivation is key, especially when coming off the bench. Joyce

has a strong mindset about his role on the team. Preparing for each game and each moment of playing time that he gets, especially in the ACC, is extremely important.

"I love to take a shower

## Richard Joyce



**Hometown:**

Mount Airy

**Year:** sophomore

**Height:** 6'5"

**Weight:** 200 lbs.

**Position:** Guard/Forward

**2002-03 PPG:** 1.8

to relax myself before the game," Joyce said. "When my name is called I try to go in there and do the little things to help the team. I try to see who is doing what and help the team to the best of my ability."