Thompson freezes future

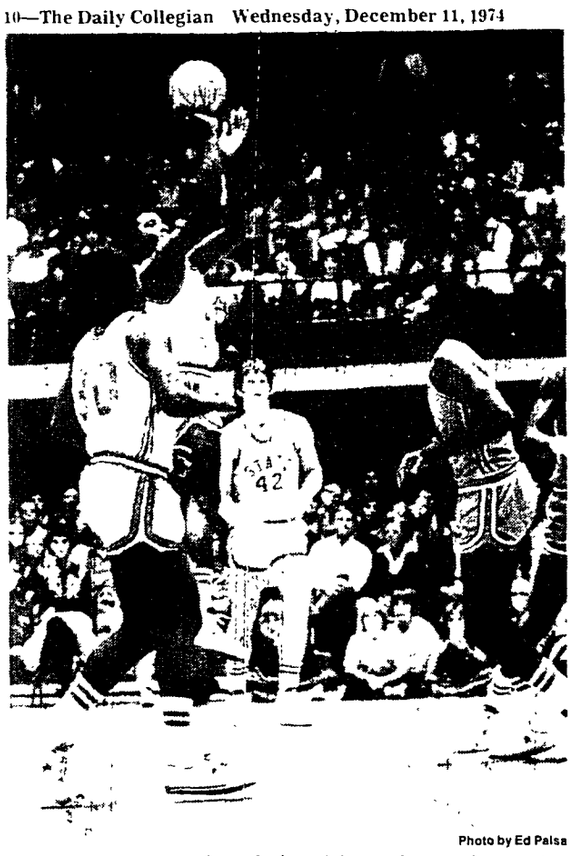

Photo by Ed Palsa

Thompson head and shoulders above the rest

The sign in the locker room reads:

"If you think you are beaten, you are.
If you think that you dare not, you don't.
If you'd like to win but think you can't,
It's almost certain you won't."

Everyday, fifteen or so tall, lanky men pass beneath the sign onto the floor of Reynolds Coliseum to practice basketball. This all takes place in Raleigh, N.C. at the North Carolina State University. One of the men who passes beneath the sign is David Thompson, considered by many to be the greatest collegiate cager.

David Thompson is 6-4, which isn't really tall for a basketball player, but he makes up for his lack of size with his great leaping ability. Followers of the game recall Thompson soaring through the air to pin a shot by UCLA giant Bill Walton against the glass last season.

After leading the Wolfpack to the National Championship, Thompson was sought after by several pro teams, including the Philadelphia 76ers. There was only one problem — he had one more year left in school. So the scouts tried to persuade Thompson to declare himself a hardship case and enter the pros.

He turned his back on the money and the fame. David said no. The decision shocked armchair coaches everywhere. How could anyone turn down so much for another year of school? The way Thompson tells it, it must have been easy.

"I wasn't tempted that much by the NBA offers," Thompson said after an intersquad scrimmage early in the preseason. "I enjoy the atmosphere, being with teammates, and the opportunity to play."

But Thompson does want to go pro after graduation.

"I'm looking forward to it," he said. "It's a challange. You need more movement, more passing, more cutting."

Dave Morris

Ass't Sports Editor

When David made the decision to finish his career at NC State, there was no man alive happier than Norm Sloan, Wolfpack coach. He wanted a championship badly. In fact he wanted it so much that he recruited David Thompson and Tom Burleson — illegally. NC State was put on a two-year probation. But the Pack bounced back immediately after the probation ended (last season) and Sloan had his wish.

Now that Sloan has tasted his first title, he wants more. Burleson has gone on to the pros, but Thompson remains. NC State was ranked first in preseason polls — because of Thompson.

In the Atlantic Coast Conference (ACC) Basketball Guide, Caulton Tudor summed it up this way: "David Thompson and any four human beings, chosen at random, have a chance of winning the national championship." And so the question arises. Is David Thompson really that good, or are the rest of the teams below par? You'll get several answers, depending on who you listen to.

If you listen to David Thompson, who claims to know a lot about himself, you may think the rest of the teams are below par. "I can be an adequate forward, maybe even a good one," he understated. Apparently no one told him David Thompson is supposed to be great.

On the other hand, if you listen to Sloan, you may think Thompson is the greatest thing since milk and cookies. Of course, if Thompson (or anyone else made sure your family had food to eat and a place to sleep, you'd have nothing but kind words for him, too.

Super or not, Thompson and the Wolfpack thus far have been unstoppable on the court this season. Barring any injuries or misfortunes, the Wolfpack could go all the way again. And David Thompson could be selected as ACC Player of the Year for the second straight year. And he shouldn't have any money problems either after the pros get him.

Photo by Ed Palsa

David Thompson deliberates basketball future

Against some teams, like Buffalo, Kent State, and Wake Forest, Thompson will be playing out of his league. It's like a big kid clowning with the little guys until the rest of the big guys come along and ask him to play in their game.

The big guys are already there, and they already asked him to play, but David Thompson wants to mess around with the little guys a little more.

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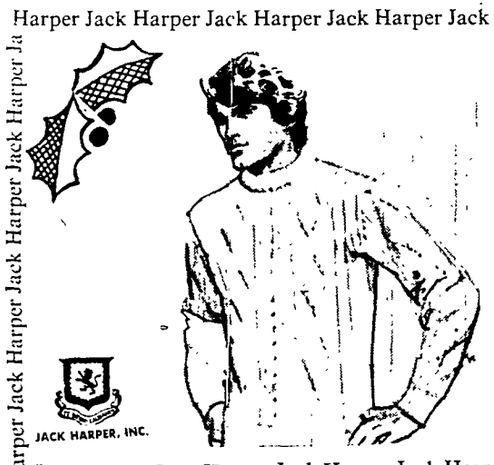

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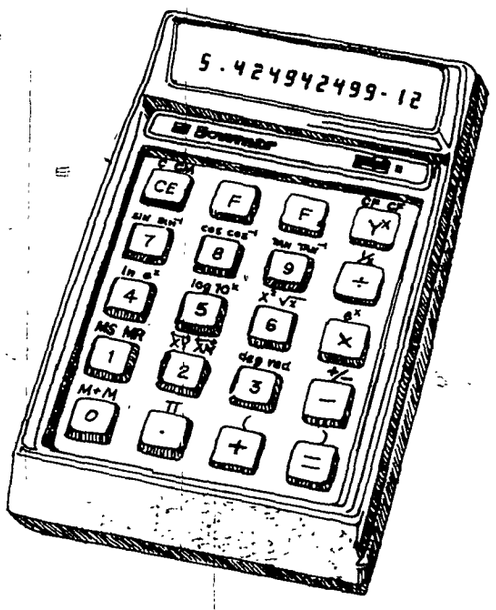

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