

# GOING GREEN?

North Carolina forward and his dad have eyes locked on the NBA

## STILL A LITTLE GREEN IN SOME AREAS

Danny Green has spent significant time in recent weeks working out with basketball trainer Jerry Powell near his hometown of North Babylon, N.Y. Here are three things Powell has emphasized:

### REMAINING REALISTIC

Powell wants Green to remember that he has a chance to greatly improve his draft stock by returning to UNC for one final season.

"He knows he's going to play. He knows he'll be in the spotlight. He knows he has a phenomenal supporting cast," Powell said. "Danny's just now starting to get hot. You know how it is when water starts to boil? Danny's like a boiling pot of water and you don't want to take that off the stove too fast."

### HIP FLEXIBILITY

The most effective drill Powell has used has Green maneuvering back and forth under a hurdle. The exercise is designed to loosen Green's hips and strengthen his hamstrings.

"Danny is naturally a very stiff kid," Powell said. "When you watch him closely, everything he does is straight up. But you can't play basketball straight up. The lower you are, the quicker you are. But you also have to be low in a certain way: butt down, chest up."

### CHANGING SPEEDS

Powell thinks Green's quickness needs to be enhanced for him to become a legitimate NBA prospect. But he has also worked with Green on learning to use his savvy to change speeds.

"You don't have to be blazing quick to play in the NBA," Powell said. "But if you play at only one speed, you become predictable. Think about when a cheetah chases a deer. If the deer tried to outrun the cheetah, he'd be caught every time. But if it changes speeds, if the deer develops a sense to cut when the cheetah gets close, now the cheetah is going to overrun the deer because it's going too fast."



By Dan Wiederer

Staff writer

The message pops with authority.

Danny Green Sr. wants the record set straight about his son's early entry into the NBA Draft.

"Danny Green is not just testing the waters," he says. "Everybody's put that out there, that he's just testing the waters. Well he's not. If Danny is going to get drafted and we think he's going to be able to get a contract, he is going to the NBA. No questions asked. Let's make that clear."

In reality, Green's situation is anything but clear. As one of 69 early entrants into this year's draft, he has until June 16 to make a final decision: stay in the draft pool or return to North Carolina for his senior season.

It's a decision loaded with conflicting dynamics, from the optimism of his father to the caution of his college coaches and NBA scouts.

With nearly four weeks to make up his mind, Green has time on his side.

The best-case scenario is that through his play in next week's NBA pre-draft camp and a handful of subsequent workouts, he makes a meteoric rise up the draft board and solidifies himself as a first-round pick.

The worst-case scenario? Green goes undrafted and forfeits his final season at Carolina.

"Look," Green Sr. says, "as of right now, there is no downside

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Green Sr.

## NBA PRE-DRAFT CAMP

- **When:** May 27-30
- **Where:** Orlando, Fla.
- **What:** The NBA pre-draft camp is the only camp organized and run by the NBA. This year's camp includes 69 players. It's open to NCAA seniors, underclassmen, international players and anyone else eligible for the draft.



AP file photo

UNC's Danny Green, right, averaged 11.5 points in 22.3 minutes last season for the Heels.

## Green: Scouts don't think he's ready for the NBA

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to the situation Danny is in. The whole idea of going to a school like North Carolina to play basketball is to try to position yourself to get into the league, to get a contract. If Danny can realize that dream right now, why not seize the opportunity?"

### Selling points

If popular reasoning prevails, the situation most likely to unfold is that Green will gain valuable exposure and criticism from NBA personnel and take his skills back to Chapel Hill.

Said one NBA scout: "I understand what he's doing. He's playing the process to his advantage right now. But I also feel like he'd be making a big mistake if he didn't pull out and head back to school."

Green Sr., however, makes a convincing NBA salespitch for his son. He points out that after three college seasons, the 6-foot-6 Green already ranks 10th all-time in UNC history with 103 blocks. The nine players above him on that list, including Tar Heel legends like Brendan Haywood, Sam Perkins, Eric Montross and Rasheed Wallace, were all taller than 6-9.

He will tell you that Green is only 20 and healthy and coming off a season in which he averaged 11.5 points while playing only 22.3 minutes. He'll tout Green's acclaim as perhaps the country's top reserve and point to former Tar Heel sixth man Marvin Williams, making more than \$4 million per season with the Atlanta Hawks.

And Green Sr. will go further and tell you about his son's hunger for big moments. He'll point out how, this season, on a pressure-packed March night at Cameron Indoor Stadium, Green stole the show.

A defeat and Carolina would have lost the ACC regular season title. But Green exploded for 18 points, eight rebounds, seven blocks and an iconic dunk over Duke's Greg Paulus in a 76-68 Tar Heels win.

"Danny played the best game of his life," Green Sr. says. "He's been doing that forever. Every time there is something huge at stake, he's always stepped up. I don't expect this to be any different."

### Caveat emptor

All of this makes a pretty convincing Danny Green infomercial for NBA teams.

But here's the fine print.

Green is a career 35.9 percent 3-point shooter.

He does not have blazing speed.

At 6-foot-6 and 210 pounds, he needs to play shooting guard in the NBA after spending chunks of his junior season at power forward.

Green may have enough talent to hold his own against other NBA prospects. But he has hardly done enough to distinguish himself from the Chase Budingers, Bill Walkers, Kyle Weavers and James Gists of the world.

Jerry Powell, a Green family friend and respected basketball trainer in North Babylon, N.Y., has been working with Green over the past month. He loves Danny's attitude, energy and versatility.

But Powell raises an eyebrow when pressed on whether Green turning pro is a good thing right now.

“As of right now, there is no downside to the situation Danny is in. The whole idea of going to a school like North Carolina to play basketball is to try to position yourself to get into the league, to get a contract. If Danny can realize that dream right now, why not seize the opportunity?”

**Danny Green Sr.**

"Look, guys in the NBA are freaks," he says. "There are no tweeners. You better have a solidified position. You better understand how to read screens and how to break every possession down. To make it in the NBA, you have to be undeniable. Being good is no good anymore. You have to be two notches better than great."

North Carolina coach Roy Williams has made his feelings clear, always advising players to return to school unless they are certain of a lofty draft status.

"I do believe a young man considering going to NBA should really make sure he's a high draft pick, definitely a No. 1 choice," Williams says. "Because that's the only money that's guaranteed. And I really think that you need to be in those top 20 picks."

At this moment, that is not the situation.

Scour any mock draft. Green's name is nowhere to be found. Talk to NBA front office personnel and scouts, and Green's name makes them shrug as if they've been asked to evaluate the vanilla pudding at the K&W Cafeteria.

For them, Green is nothing special, his flaws evident.

"With a player like him, it's pretty simple. Consistency," says an NBA scout. "He didn't show great consistency this year. Bottom line. Now we all know there were some off-court things going on with his family. But what every NBA team wants to see is a level of consistency. They want to feel like when the coach puts you in, they can count on getting the same thing every night. Danny Green hasn't come close to proving that yet."

### Kid's choice

At this moment, all the signs seem to be pointing Green back toward the Dean E. Smith Center. Waiting for him there is a senior season in which he will play alongside the reigning National Player of the Year (Tyler Hansbrough) on a Tar Heels team that will again be favored to reach the Final Four.

Waiting for him at the next level is a daily barrage of uncertainty.

Danny Green Sr. says his son's goal is to become a first-round pick. But even if he were considered a second-round selection, Green would consider staying in the draft if given a strong indication he can earn a contract.

Green Sr. knows his son will have Carolina on his mind all through this process and will learn a lot at next week's pre-draft camp. But he also wants outsiders to consider the risk of a career-ending injury next season and the idea that Danny Green is so close to realizing his boyhood dream.

"Danny loves North Carolina," his dad says. "He loves the campus. He loves the fans. But eventually there comes a point where you have to stop and say, 'What do I have to do to help myself?' Right now Danny feels he's good enough to play in the NBA, and I don't disagree with him."

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