

# Poised for a Shot

STORY BY TERRY JORDAN • PHOTO BY ROB HILL

**T**RY AS HE MIGHT, KENDRICK Moore just can't shake March 19 from his mind. That was the day when Tyus Edney, UCLA's diminutive point guard, sank a last-second shot to give the Bruins a 75-74 victory over Mizzou in the second round of the NCAA basketball tournament. Only moments before, Moore, the Tigers' point guard, had fed Julian Winfield under the basket for a seemingly secure 74-73 MU lead with four seconds remaining.

Seemingly secure? "Yeah, tell me about it," Moore says. "We had it pulled out from under our legs, just like that." UCLA, the top-ranked team in the country most of the year, went on to win the national championship, and the Tigers came home empty-handed.

But the story doesn't end there. It keeps replaying itself in Kendrick Moore's mind. He thinks of it every time he opens his locker and sees a newspaper clipping trumpeting the Bruins' win. "I put it there to remind me of what could have been," he says. He thought of it every day this past summer as he walked to work at the state capitol in Hartford, Conn., where he served as an aide to House Speaker Thomas Ritter. "I'd keep replaying those last four seconds in my mind, wondering how we could have made it come out differently," says Moore, a Hartford native.

And he continues to think about it as the Tigers prepare for the 1995-96 season.

Forget, for a moment, that Moore earned academic All-Big Eight honors last year, posting a 3.0 grade-point average in business marketing. Forget that he was named to the conference's all-freshman team. Forget that CBS-TV named him MU's "Player of the Game" in the UCLA contest. One wonders whether Moore might not give it all up if he could have one more crack at those last four seconds.

"I guess you can't do that, though, can you?" he asks. "But hey, this year is coming up. Now we have something to prove." It's a sentiment shared by his teammates. "Realizing we were that close will inspire us to play even harder this year," says forward Derek Grimm. Adds guard and team leader Winfield: "None of us is saying that we're going to come back and win the national championship. We've got a lot of work to do before anything like that could happen. But the UCLA game will be a motivator."

Lending a cautious voice to the chorus is Coach Norm Stewart, BS Ed '56, M Ed '60, entering his 29th year at Mizzou. While some sportswriters are already putting exclamation points after this year's prospects, Stewart sees a number of question marks.

Item: The Tigers lost only one player, Paul O'Liney, from the squad that compiled a 20-9 record last year and played superbly in the NCAA tournament. So, as the thinking goes, they'll be a stronger, tighter unit this season. "But in May we

took a trip to Australia for a round of exhibition games, and the team didn't jell the way I thought it would," Stewart says. "That's not encouraging at all."

Item: Forward Kelly Thames, the Big Eight "Freshman of the Year" two seasons ago, returns to the team after a knee injury kept him out of the 1994-95 lineup. "That sounds good on the surface, but you never know how a player is going to respond," Stewart says. "Sometimes it takes a year or more to come back."

There's no doubt that the coach is excited about the talents of Winfield, one of the most capable floor leaders in recent years. Stewart also praises the talents and hard work of his juniors: Power forward Grimm, guard Corey Tate and playmaker Jason Sutherland, along with seniors Sammie and Simeon Haley. They'll help the team take on a formidable schedule that includes Arkansas, Illinois and George Washington in the early season. In the increasingly competitive Big Eight, Kansas lost only one starter from its 1994-95 squad and appears to be the team to beat this year.

Maybe if everything comes together, the Tigers will give KU — or someone else — a run for the title. But one thing is clear: There's a new incentive to win. "You know, the UCLA game is a bad memory in a way, but it's the sort of thing that will get us going," Moore says. "Next time we get a chance like that, hopefully we'll come out on top."

