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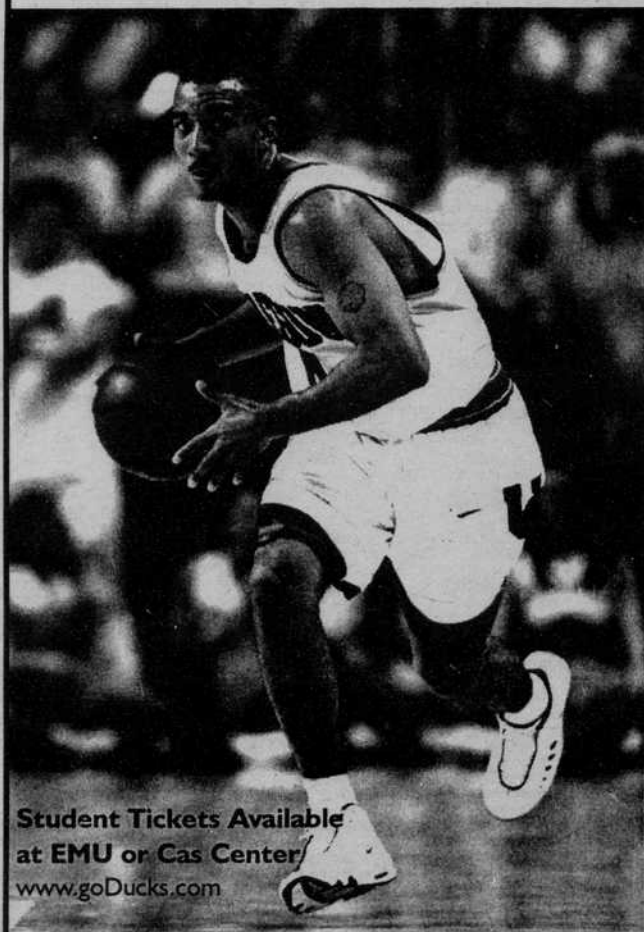
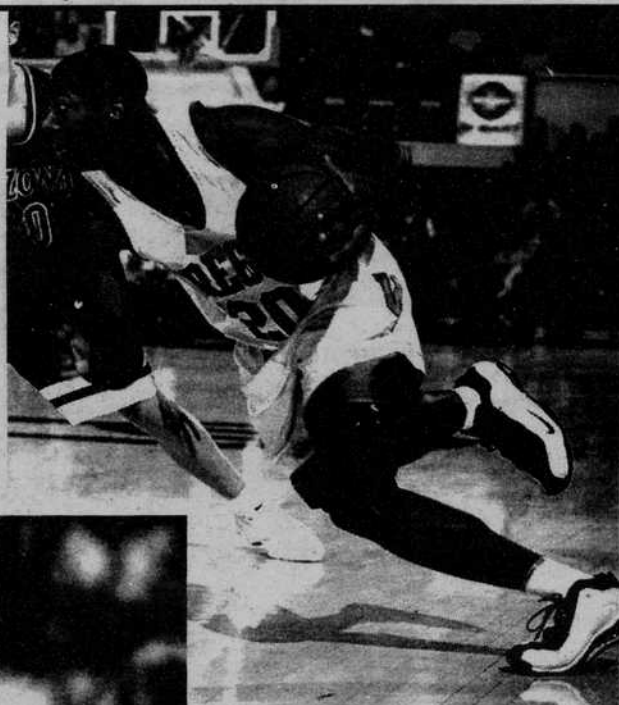


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**Weinke plans return  
for his senior season**

By Brent Kallestad  
The Associated Press

TALLAHASSEE, Fla. — First  
Peter Warrick, now Chris Weinke.

The Florida State quarterback  
said Monday he will come back  
for his senior season with an eye  
on winning two straight titles, a  
year after Warrick gave up NFL  
riches to return to win a national  
championship.

Weinke, who threw four touch-  
down passes in a 46-29 victory  
over Virginia Tech in the Sugar  
Bowl, will be 28 for his final col-  
lege season.

In what he described "a no-lose  
situation," Weinke surprised his  
parents, brother and coaches with  
a decision to return.

"They said, 'you're leaving.' I  
said, 'You're wrong.' No one was  
right. I hope I am," he said.

Weinke said he was told by NFL  
scouts he'd be a third-round pick  
at best in the April draft.

"I don't want to sit on the bench  
making the minimum watching  
Florida State on Saturdays play on  
TV," he said.

Monday was the final day for  
underclassmen to declare for the  
draft. Michigan running back An-  
thony Thomas said he's returning,  
while Tennessee guard Cosey  
Coleman became the fifth Volun-  
teers star to leave early for the NFL.

"One of the goals I made before I  
got here is to finish my education,"  
said Thomas, who will graduate in  
December. "That's one thing they  
can't take away from me."

Earlier, Tennessee running back  
Jamal Lewis, defensive end Shaun  
Ellis, defensive back Deon Grant  
and linebacker Raynoch Thomp-  
son passed up final college seasons.

Other top underclassmen head-  
ed for the NFL: All-America kicker  
Sebastian Janikowski (Florida  
State), linebackers LaVar Arring-  
ton (Penn State) and Na'il Diggs  
(Ohio State), wide receivers Plaxi-  
co Burress (Michigan State),  
Kwame Cavil (Texas), Darrell  
Jackson (Florida) and Dez White

(Georgia Tech), and cornerback  
Lewis Sanders (Maryland).

The NFL announces the official  
list Tuesday.

Florida State offensive coordina-  
tor Mark Richt said Weinke, who is  
the 6-foot-5 and 240 pounds, can  
improve his standing with the NFL  
by losing 10 or 15 pounds.

"He can be a more accurate  
passer and better decision maker,"  
Richt said. "He'll be closer to be-  
ing ready to play."

Florida State coach Bobby Bow-  
den was on the West Coast recruit-  
ing and not immediately available  
for comment.

“They said ‘You’re  
leaving.’ I said, ‘You’re  
wrong.’”

Chris Weinke  
quarterback,  
Florida State

With Janikowski the only Flori-  
da State underclassman leaving  
early, the Seminoles will have  
nine starters back on defense and  
six on offense from their starting  
lineup against Virginia Tech.

"We're loaded," Weinke said.  
"I'm excited about next year."

With Weinke and 14 other  
starters back from this year's un-  
beaten team, the Seminoles could  
find themselves as the country's  
preseason No. 1 pick again next  
summer. It would be the sixth  
time since 1988.

Weinke spent six years in the  
Toronto Blue Jays' minor league  
system before resuming his foot-  
ball career. He threw for 3,103  
yards and 25 TDs this season.

Richt will now have a three-year  
starter at quarterback for the first  
time since he arrived in Tallahas-  
see 13 years ago.

"There is nothing like coaching  
a guy who knows what he's do-  
ing," Richt said Monday.



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