

Coach Mack Brown probably will start Mike Thomas on Sunday against USC.

UNC Faces Severe Odds in Anaheim

Editor's note: This is the final article in a three-part series previewing Sunday's Disneyland Pigskin Classic.

BY STEVE POLITI
SPORTS EDITOR

Ah, intangibles. When teams measure up evenly on the field, oddsmakers, gamblers, fans, coaches and the media turn to things off the field. And in that category, Mack Brown has taken a realistic approach to the Sunday night Disneyland Pigskin Classic.

"Southern Cal has every advantage in this game," he says. How about the fans, coach? Who will they pick?

"I would say that since everything is in the favor of Southern Cal — travel, home game, Coach Robinson, we don't know anything about their staff, 19 starters back, all of that — that most people would anticipate that we'll lose," he says.

The Tar Heels, ranked 20th in the pre-season Associated Press poll, are listed as 9-point underdogs to the Trojans, ranked 18th. On paper, the similarities between the teams suggests a close game. But then there are the intangibles.

The distractions. This week was the first week of class. Players attended two days of classes before hopping on a chartered flight Thursday afternoon.

The California factor. Many players have never traveled to West Coast. "Many of our guys have never been outside this state," Brown said. "In fact some have not been very far to different parts of the state."

"(Defensive tackle) Marcus Jones doesn't even like to fly. And he had trouble flying to Tallahassee. We're not going to tell him how far it is to Anaheim because he may not go."

And it's the first game in college football for John Robinson since he left Southern Cal in 1983 for the Los Angeles Rams. He's a big part of USC's tradition, compiling a 67-14-2 record, a national championship and three Rose Bowl wins. The Trojans will want to win for him.

A new coach means a new system. UNC couldn't watch any film of Robinson's offensive and defensive schemes. You can bet USC watched plenty.

"He probably will not do the same type things he did with the Rams," Brown said.



Pigskin Classic
UNC vs.
Southern California

"We really will not know what he's involved with offensively or defensively until sometime during the ball game."

Step on the field, and the forecast isn't quite as bleak. USC and UNC have very similar teams. At tailback, for example, the two squads that have produced the most 1,000-yard rushers in college football history don't have established performers.

"At this time last year we knew exactly who we thought would win the game," Brown said. "We knew if Natrone (Means) got tackled in the first quarter, we're going to keep handing it to him because he was going to break some tackles before the day was over."

But Means and his 3,074 yards have left for the NFL. The Tar Heels will give the ball to sophomore Curtis Johnson. He ran the ball just 34 times last year, gaining 244 yards for a 7.2 average.

The Trojans turn to Dwight McFadden, a sophomore who averaged 3.7 yards in 126 carries last season. Their top fullback and tailback graduated.

Both teams have veteran offensive lines, though the Trojans pack more under the belt. USC defensive end Willie McGinest is a certain No. 1 NFL draft pick next year. UNC linebacker Bernardo Harris was picked by NCAA Preview as the ACC's top defensive player.

Both teams have a go-to receiver. Johnnie Morton is third in career receptions at USC. Corey Holliday should become North Carolina's all-time leader by the game's end.



SPORTS BRIEFS

Sports stories from the university and nation

UNC Forced to Cancel Final In-State Workout

Heavy rains and lightning caused the UNC football squad to cancel its final in-state workout prior to leaving for Anaheim Thursday afternoon.

Tar Heel head coach Mack Brown had planned a two-hour review session but canceled the drills because of the weather. The players instead watched film and met with position coaches.

"Number one we're still concerned with the stomach virus that has gone around the team," Brown said. "Fortunately we still have a few days before the game to get over this."

"Canceling practice today will force us to do a little more work in California than we had planned."

Game time for UNC's clash with Southern Cal in the Disneyland Pigskin Classic is 9 p.m.

Will the Bambino Curse Finally End? Red Sox Vow To Honor Descendants

BOSTON — The Red Sox will present World Series mementos to descendants of their 1918 championship team, resolving a snub that some claim has put a 75-year-old curse on Boston.

The 1918 squad, the last Red Sox team to win a World Series, was denied commemorative championship emblems apparently because of a labor-management dispute that included a short players' strike before the fifth game of the World Series.

Members of that team, and their descendants, have sought the emblems for decades. The team had 20 players, including Babe Ruth, on its World Series roster.

Descendants will be presented with framed stickpins during a pre-game ceremony on Sept. 4. Julia Ruth Stevens, the daughter of Babe Ruth, is expected to be among those attending.

"The current Red Sox ownership believes that it is inappropriate for the 1918 Red Sox to be the only World Series championship team not to have received an award for their accomplishment," Dick Bresciani, Red Sox vice president for public relations, said Thursday.

New No. 1 Courier Draws Favorable U.S. Open Path

NEW YORK — Top-seeded Jim Courier drew a far easier path Thursday for next week's U.S. Open than No. 2 Pete Sampras and two-time defending champion Stefan Edberg.

Courier, seeking his first U.S. Open title, starts off against Marco Aurelio Gorriz of Spain, with the winner advancing to play a qualifier. The only real threat to Courier before the quarters could come from unseeded but still dangerous Mali'Vai Washington.

Sampras, the Wimbledon champion, 1990 U.S. Open winner and runner-up last year, faces the possibility of a tough match against No. 16 Andre Agassi in the round of 16.

Edberg, No. 3, and Michael Stich, No. 6, are in the bottom half of the draw with Sampras and Agassi.

Steffi Graf, the women's No. 1 seed and two-time champion, should breeze through the early rounds as usual. But she, too, may find trouble in the round of 16 with a potential match against No. 13 Mary Pierce, one of the hardest sluggers on the tour.

If Graf gets by Pierce and goes on to the semifinals, she could find herself once more facing Jana Novotna, who nearly upset her in the Wimbledon final.

Perhaps the most intriguing quarterfinal, though, could be No. 3 Martina Navratilova against No. 7 Jennifer Capriati. Navratilova has been playing well and would like nothing more than to cap her career with another U.S. Open title. Capriati is just as eager to claim her first Grand Slam victory.

World-famous Gymnasts To Perform on Campus

1984 gold medalist Mary Lou Retton and five-time medal winner Shannon Miller will headline a gymnastics exhibition Oct. 15 at the Smith Center.

The 1993 Tour of American Olympic & World Champion Gymnasts will also showcase Svetlana Boguinskaia, Dominique Dawes and Kurt Thomas. Tickets go on sale Monday and can be purchased through Ticketmaster or at the Smith Center box office.

UNC Alum Surhoff Might Pursue Legal Action

MILWAUKEE — Milwaukee Brewers general manager Sal Bando has told third baseman B.J. Surhoff to consider filing criminal charges against Oakland pitcher Edwin Nunez for throwing a "sucker punch" during a brawl.

"How you do correct the injustices that happen out there?" Bando asked before Thursday's season finale between the two last-place teams.

"The worst thing about team fights are the sucker punches. What are the consequences of hitting a guy who's being held? ... We're just lucky B.J. only got stitches."

Nunez hit Surhoff early Wednesday morning during a 25-minute brawl in the second game of a doubleheader.

The punch rocked Surhoff's head back, knocked him down and bloodied his lip with a cut requiring four stitches to close.

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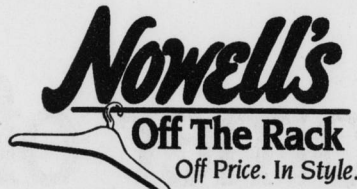
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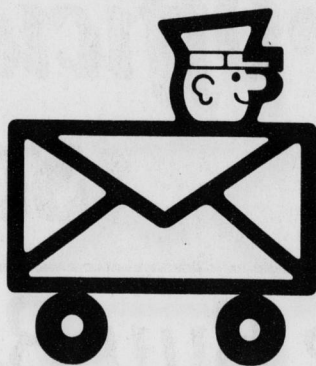
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