

Let's Pretend Means Stayed A Tar Heel

Not only Saturday's matchup between Florida State and North Carolina a fight for first place in the ACC, it's a head-to-head challenge between the top two Heisman Trophy candidates in the nation. That's right. It's Charlie Ward against Natrone Means.

This game marks the first chance in several years to see the two top ...

Oh, that's right. Natrone went pro. I forgot.

He's burning it up in the pros with the San Diego Chargers. Just this Sunday, Means rushed four times for 13 yards in his team's 34-17 loss to the Denver Broncos.

Speculation is the greatest thing about sports. It's almost a pastime for fans and sports writers. What if 1972 Dolphins played the 1986 Bears in the Super Bowl? What if the Red Sox hadn't traded Babe Ruth?

And what if Natrone Means had stayed with the Tar Heels instead of giving up his final year of eligibility?

UNC has two tailbacks leading the ACC's rushing list, Leon Johnson and Curtis Johnson. They have combined for 88 carries, 732 yards and nine touchdowns in North Carolina's first three games.

Insert Means. He probably wouldn't get 88 carries in three games as UNC's lone tailback. But he could get about 70 to 75 carries. And with the Johnsons averaging eight, let's say Means, a savvy, experienced and explosive tailback, could average seven.

Math time. Seven times 70 equals 490 yards after three games. That's not impossible. Means, who finished his UNC career with 3,074 yards, already would be within about 800 yards passing Amos Lawrence as UNC's all-time leading rusher.

Marshall Faulk, San Diego State's star rusher, is Ward's toughest competition for the prestigious trophy, which is given out annually to the best college football player. Faulk has rushed 49 times for 234 yards in two games this season, not exactly the numbers he needs to get his name engraved on the trophy.

Faulk gets the attention because of his great season last year and his second-place finish in the Heisman voting. But maybe Means raised just enough eyebrows with his 1,195 yards in 1992. UNC, after all, was 14-0 when he rushed for more than 100 yards.

At this point, they might as well place a stamp on the trophy and mail it to Ward (c/o Bobby Bowden). No one comes close to his numbers — 70 percent passing, the signal-caller for an offense that has averaged 600 yards and 48 points a game, he gains over eight yards every time he touches the ball, he hasn't been intercepted this season.

The world will converge on Kenan Stadium to watch the only true Heisman trophy candidate Saturday night.

Maybe Ward throws an interception or two and doesn't have that machine clicking on the Kenan turf. He is human (we think).

And Means (remember, we're still in make-believe land) could have had a chance to be the first player this season to do anything offensively against the Seminoles this season, whether it's breaking a big run or knocking the wind out of a Florida State linebacker with one of his patented crushing hits.

Means gave up that chance because he feared getting injured in his fourth and final year with the Tar Heels. And besides, his numbers were good enough to make him a second-round pick.

But now he's an average running back playing with an average NFL team in an average city.

Of course, he's making a million and change over the next four years. But that's just money.

It's not the Heisman.



STEVE POLITI
FLAGRANT FOUL

FSU Offense a Different Challenge for UNC's Defense

BY ZACHARY ALBERT
ASSISTANT SPORTS EDITOR

If a defensive unit wanted to pad its season stats last Saturday, Kenan Stadium was not the place to be.

UNC and Maryland shredded offensive records that had not been threatened in decades. The Tar Heels' home crowd witnessed a virtual touchdown orgy on both sides of the football that left secondaries shaken and linebackers lackluster.

And with No. 1 FSU coming to town after ransacking Clemson by a margin the Heinz ketchup makers would love (that's 57-0), the Tar Heels had to defend their defense.

"Florida State is obviously the best team in the country," UNC head coach Mack Brown said. "Everybody knows how good Clemson is and for Florida State to dominate them 57-0, it's just a different level of football."

If the Tar Heel defensive squad plays the way it did against the Tarps, Brown could be in for a long night.

The "shoot" part of Maryland's Run-and-Shoot offense stunned the UNC deep coverage for a total of 405 yards through the air.

"I don't think we're as bad against the pass as we looked (Saturday)," Brown said. "We had a few interception possibilities, but we did not play the deep ball well at all, and that is a major concern right now. We'll obviously be tested more so next Saturday night."

That's a scary proposition for the No. 13 Tar Heels, whose defense was spread open by wide receiver Jermaine Lewis. The

Countdown to FSU



Previewing UNC's Saturday matchup with the Seminoles

Terp's designated pinball hauled in nine passes for 250 yards Saturday, one yard shy of a Maryland school record.

Strong safety Sean Boyd said that the secondary was amazed with Lewis' talent. "They had quality speed out of No. 4 (Lewis)," Boyd said. "They just threw the ball up and let him run under it. I guess our defense just didn't get there in time."

Clearly, the defense will have to make adjustments when the likes of Charlie Ward, Tamarick Vanover, Kez McCorvey et al come to Chapel Hill. Ward's a Heisman Trophy candidate at quarterback, and although Vanover and McCorvey aren't as quick as Lewis, they average more than 15 yards a catch.

"We've got to defend a player like Lewis better if we're going to have a chance to win against a good team," Brown said.

Cornerback Sean Crocker agreed: "From the secondary standpoint, we know they're going to throw deep — they throw

deep on everyone. We just have to go back and get some coverage assignments right."

A reason the Terrapins were able to loft passes at will was the lack of consistent pressure on QB Scott Milanovich, who completed 34 of 50 attempts. Milanovich had plenty of time in the pocket to recognize the defense and make the play.

UNC cannot give Ward the same amount of time in the backfield and not expect to get burned. "Charlie Ward is so poised," Brown said. "He's like a coach on the field. He has such a command over their offense right now."

The Tar Heels' defense had been stellar until Saturday, allowing an average of six points in the first two games. However, FSU's defense has not given up a true offensive score in three games this season.

The Seminole offense hasn't been too shabby this year either. Bobby Bowden's troops have posted 144 points this season, allowing Ward to rest early and often in the

second half.

UNC will face a Florida State offense that boasts more than one dimension, unlike Maryland. While the Tarps feature the Run and Shoot every down, the 'Noles can go from throwing bombs from the no-huddle on one series to the I-formation and handing off to their fullback on the next.

And although it's hard to imagine a team surpassing UNC's offensive showing against Maryland, the 'Noles have proven that they can. Last year, FSU exploded for 69 points against the Tarps' 21, recording 40 first downs, 434 passing yards and 858 yards of total offense in Tallahassee.

Despite FSU's and Maryland's hefty stats, UNC linebacker Rick Steinbacher said that the defense has tried to keep its focus on the tasks at hand.

"After tomorrow, this game's dead and buried," Steinbacher said Saturday. "The 42 points, however many yards, it's gone. It's time to work on Florida State."

Women's Soccer Gets a Test Without Hamm in Starting Lineup

BY BRIAN EDMONDS
STAFF WRITER

With nine minutes and 14 seconds left in UNC's match against Portland Saturday, 1992 National Player of the Year Mia Hamm went down with a knee injury.

That left big cleats to fill for 10 other starters.

And the Tar Heels, in the midst of an NCAA record 61-game winning streak, rebounded two days later against George Washington and played what head coach Anson Dorrance called "our best game yet."

A team spokesman said Hamm suffered a mild to medium sprain of the medial collateral ligament in her right knee. While early diagnosis predicted that Hamm would miss four to six weeks, later reports revealed the senior likely would miss only seven days to two weeks.

Hamm suffered the most recent injury when three Portland defenders surrounded her on the sideline, and just as she released the ball down the line, a fourth defender tackled the UNC striker.

The Tar Heels held on against the Portland Pilots and won 2-0. But Dorrance said, "I don't know if winning one game is worth losing Mia."

With the top player down, the Tar Heels went looking for another player to step up. "It may become the Tisha Venturini show," Dorrance said.

The two-time All-America midfielder



Rita Tower provided senior leadership for the Tar Heels this weekend.

has three goals, tops on the team. Venturini, a junior, is a dominant player and likely to succeed Hamm as the team's leader next season.

But it was Danielle Egan who carried the scoring load Sunday for UNC, knocking in two goals in the 4-0 win.

Dorrance was pleased with the junior

midfielder's effort against the Colonials.

"She was outstanding today — two goals from the midfield was great. Danielle is on the verge of really developing a personality. She is doing a wonderful job in the midfield and is beginning to make things happen."

The win against Portland was extremely important for the Tar Heels and Dorrance was pleased with the outcome, yet not as happy with the overall play of his team.

"We need to work on developing our finishing skills. Our proven scorers didn't score, and we need a group to step forward," he said.

"Rita (Tower), Danielle (Egan), Paige (Coley) and Debbie (Keller) all have the potential to be scorers."

Keller has been a pleasant surprise for the Tar Heels with her early contributions. The freshman forward earned a starting spot with her play against Maryland and scored her first collegiate goal.

"She did an amazing job against Maryland, that was her best game thus far," Dorrance said. "One of her best qualities is her play with her back to goal. She has great vision on the field. Debbie is great in the air as well."

"We're hoping she can evolve as the kind of player that can take on a defender and be able to finish with consistency. Her play has been very significant to us."

This is not the first time Hamm has been injured in a game. In 1990 she tore a ligament in her knee in the NCAA tournament due to a hard foul. She had to be helped off the field twice, but returned both times to play in the national semifinals and championship game to lead UNC to its ninth national title.

The graduation of Kristine Lilly, the first four-time All-America in women's soccer history, and now the latest injury to Hamm, has added an extra amount of pressure to senior Tower.

Tower responded well in the match

against George Washington. The starting forward netted a goal 29 seconds into the game and added an assist later.

"Rita needs to establish herself as a finisher," Dorrance said. "She aspires to be one of the best players in the world. She's learning to finish her chances and create havoc with her mobility."

Sunday's finale gave a chance for coach Dorrance to give some experience to his reserves. "Amy Roberts, Mikki Denney, and Jane Byers all played well," Dorrance said. "They're very aggressive."

Ashley Riggs, a sophomore from Raleigh, also drew special attention from Dorrance. "She is a very skillful player," the coach said. "Ashley did a good job of controlling the midfield for us."

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