

Barnes returns to rivalry with 2 TDs



Tar Heel junior Octavus Barnes (4) celebrates with offensive lineman Byron Thomas (75) after Barnes' second touchdown catch Saturday.

BY ROBBIE PICKERAL
SPORTS EDITOR

Ten months ago, Octavus Barnes never thought he'd experience the N.C. State-North Carolina football rivalry again.

As the UNC flanker was slowly, painstakingly carted off the grass at Joe Robbie Stadium in the midst of the Tar Heels' 20-10 win in the Carquest Bowl last January, he felt little but the numbness in his knee and the mental anguish of wondering if he'd ever be the same speedy playmaker.

"I never thought I'd see this rivalry again," Barnes said Saturday, minutes after UNC's 52-20 blasting of the rival Wolfpack.

The junior from Wilson did more than 'see it' Saturday, he epitomized it. After an off-season of rehab and an in-season of questions regarding his mental healing and physical toughness, Barnes came off the bench in the second quarter for injured wideout Na Brown to catch three balls, two for TDs.

"It was a long road coming," Barnes said. "... I really wanted to get back out there."

He got back with a bang in the second half. On the 12th play of UNC's opening series in the third quarter, Tar Heel quarterback Chris Keldorf looped out of the pocket on State's 26-yard line, scanned his receivers, then darted a pass low into the end zone, where Barnes slid on his knees to bring it in.

"It was a great play by Octavus,"

Keldorf said. "I just kind of threw it up, trying to make a play, and he just made a great play."

Barnes said: "It was a scramble. And what I'm supposed to do is follow Chris until he gets sacked, throws it away or finds somebody. And it just so happened that there was nobody there in that spot, and I was just able to come back under it and grab it."

Almost 15 game-minutes later, Barnes sprinted past State defender Jason Perry, caught an on-the-button Keldorf throw on the right sideline and sprinted home for his fourth TD reception of 60 yards or more in his career.

"Yeah, it felt good," Barnes said. "Chris put the ball right there, and I just had to reach out and get it. He gave me enough room where when I caught the ball, I could jet it up and run with it. That's what I had, and from then on, I just saw blue."

Fans — and coaches — saw the pre-injury Barnes, an in-your-face, do-it-all playmaker who did it all with pizzazz and finesse.

"That looked like last year," UNC coach Mack Brown said. "That's the first time I've seen it where I thought he took off and out-ran a guy who had him man-to-man."

"And I thought, 'It looks like he's back.'"

Barnes said he never really left. His bum knee stopped him for a while, then learning UNC's new offensive system slowed him.

But for the first time since January, it all seemed to come together for Barnes ... during perhaps the biggest rivalry of the year, in a matchup of schools in which Barnes has never lost.

"And hopefully," he said, "we never will."



UNC flanker OCTAVUS BARNES caught three passes for 109 yards vs. N.C. State.

Freshmen provide spark in Rolex tennis tourney

BY AARON BEARD
ASSISTANT SPORTS SATURDAY EDITOR

With three freshmen slated to compete in this weekend's Rolex Southeast Region Indoor Championships, North Carolina women's tennis coach Kitty Harrison could've easily been worried.

After all, 22 teams from four states were pouring into Chapel Hill boasting the region's best players.

It spelled potential disaster. Crushing losses in tough early-season competition could kill the confidence of the rookies.

But freshmen Jessica Zagaczyk, Cena Hackler and Jeni Burnette spread their wings on Friday's opening day of competition at Cone-Kenfield Tennis Center. Each won her opening day-match in the singles competition, with Zagaczyk advancing to the third round of play.

Meanwhile, the Burnette/Hackler doubles tandem joined the team of J.C. Biber and Alison Levy to reach the second round of the doubles competition.

"This is the best Rolex Regional we've ever had in my coaching experience," Harrison said. "The tournament has no weak players. They're the top players

from four states, so we were delighted." The tourney served as a qualifier for the Rolex National Intercollegiate Championships in Dallas. The two finalists of the singles competition and the champions of the doubles competition move on to the nationals.

And though UNC advanced no one to Dallas, there were bright spots.

The play of Zagaczyk was the highlight of the weekend for UNC. The freshman won her first two matches of the competition but lost in the third round to Louisville's Nadia Karpol, 6-3, 6-3.

"They're all heavy hitters," Harrison said. "(Zagaczyk) never got into the match. (Karpol) just outthit her. She pounded the ball. Although Jessica's a heavy hitter, she wasn't quite ready for it."

"Actually, there were only a handful of players here who could have handled (Karpol)."

Zagaczyk also tallied a victory against Kelly Brown of Kentucky, 6-1, 1-6, 7-5 in the second round and rallied from losing her first set of play to win 4-6, 6-2, 6-3 over Tennessee's Kristin Bachochin.

"I wasn't nervous, just excited," Zagaczyk said. "I had a huge home crowd that helped me. It gave me some confidence because I'm only a freshman."

"It was a great experience to play on our home court. It was such a big tournament, but since it was on our home court, I wasn't as nervous."

Hackler reached the second round but fell to Massoumeh Emami of Kentucky, 6-4, 6-0, while Burnette fell to Elenora Vegliante of Campbell, 6-2, 6-1.



UNC senior ALISON LEVY teamed with J.C. Biber to reach the second round of doubles play.

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