

Tar Heels to Battle Paladins on Saturday

BY HUGH PRESSLEY
Senior Writer

Usually, when an ACC team sees an opponent like Div. I-AA Furman on its schedule, they prematurely pencil in a fat 'W' without as much as a thought.

But if the Tar Heels (1-6, 0-5 in the ACC) did that at the beginning of this season, they were surely getting ahead of themselves.

Judging from the past five games — all UNC losses — Coach Carl Torbush and company might end up having to reluctantly erase that 'W' after their 1:30 p.m. contest against the Paladins on Saturday at Kenan Stadium.

Furman (6-1, 5-0 in the Southern Conference) comes into Chapel Hill with freight train-like momentum. Since losing their home opener against Elon, the Paladins have won six consecutive games, include last week's 48-21 drubbing of East Tennessee State.

The Southern Conference leaders are ranked 14th nationally in Div. I-AA and are spearheaded by a relentless option attack, starring bruising fullback-turned-tailback Louis Ivory. The 5-foot-8, 193-pound sophomore is averaging 131 rushing yards per game and needs 80 yards to have a 1,000-yard season.

"Furman is a very good football team; they are very well-coached and always have been," Torbush said. "They will come in here feeling like they can

1999 UNC Football Schedule

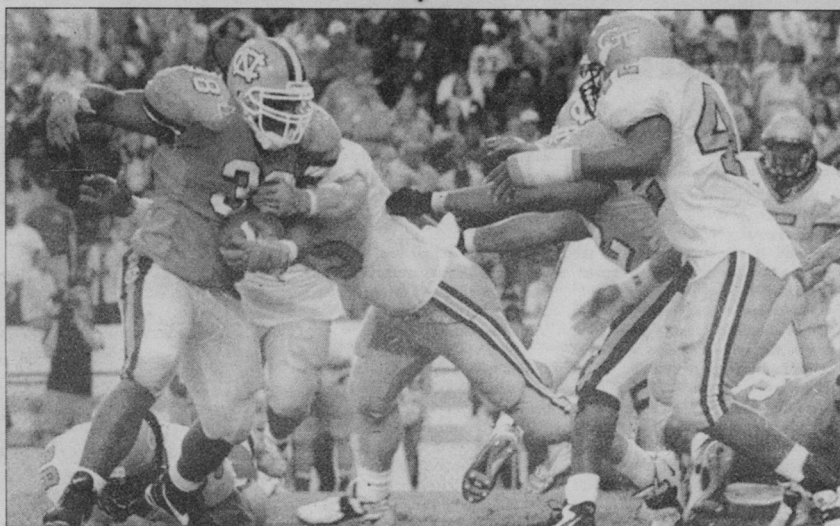


Sept. 4, Virginia 20, UNC 17
Sept. 11, UNC 42, Indiana 30
Sept. 25, FSU 42, UNC 10
Oct. 2, Clemson 31, UNC 20
Oct. 9, Ga. Tech 31, UNC 24
Oct. 16, Houston 20, UNC 12
Oct. 23 Maryland 45, UNC 7
Oct. 30, vs. Furman
Nov. 6, vs. Wake Forest
Nov. 11, vs. N.C. State
Nov. 20, vs. Duke

win this football game.

"We'll have to play better than we've played the last several weeks to have a chance to win."

That's an understatement.



DTH FILE PHOTO

UNC fullback Deon Dyer fights off tacklers in the Tar Heels' 31-24 loss to Georgia Tech on Oct. 9. UNC will take on Furman this Saturday in Kenan Stadium.

The Tar Heels are a talented team with little hope and a serious "what's-my-motivation?" complex. Since losing Ronald Curry for the season, the Tar Heels have lost what little confidence they had at the beginning of the season, especially through the air.

Backup quarterbacks Luke Huard and Antwon Black have combined for a mere 265 in three games since Curry tore his Achilles tendon against Georgia Tech on Oct. 9.

UNC's passing offense, meanwhile, is 100th in the nation out of 114 Div. I-AA

teams (140 yards per game).

But for the Tar Heels to get their first home win of the season, they'll not only have to stop Ivory and throw the ball down the field, but also capitalize on one of Furman's weaknesses — defending the run.

Although the Paladins have the Div. I-AA's fourth-best total defense, their rushing defense is less-than-stellar, giving up 180 yards per game.

If Black and sophomore tailback Dmonique Williams (this weekend's starter) can keep the Paladins' defen-

sive line on their heels, Torbush might be able to breathe a little easier after Saturday's game.

But the key word is might.

"I base everything we do on improvement and especially with a young football team you should see improvement," Torbush said.

"And I do not feel that we've improved the last two weeks. A lot of that has to do with certain plays, but we've not been able to make the plays that we need to make to give ourselves a chance to win."

Spoon Ready to Return to Football Squad Next Season

BY RACHEL CARTER
Assistant Sports Editor

North Carolina linebacker Brandon Spoon announced Tuesday that he would redshirt this season and return to the Tar Heels next year.

Spoon has not played for UNC since Sept. 11, when he ruptured his left biceps tendon during a play in the Tar Heels' 42-30 win against Indiana.

A preseason Butkus Award candidate, Spoon considered leaving for the NFL but chose another year of Tar Heel football rather than taking his chances in

the NFL Draft next year.

"I had to sit back and weigh my options a little bit," Spoon said. "I didn't want to make a rash decision.

"All in all, I think it's in my best interests to come back and honestly, I want to come back — I want to play for (UNC) coach (Carl) Torbush for another year."

Spoon, a Burlington native, had 78 tackles last season and five sacks for a loss of 37 yards. He was expected to be a major contributor this season.

With Spoon returning next season,

the defense will have a senior around which to rebuild their defense. With Spoon out since the second game, North Carolina's defense has plummeted to last in the ACC and 103rd in the nation.

Torbush said he talked to Spoon about his options and did not pressure him.

"I'm excited," Torbush said. "It's like

signing a blue-chip recruit. It's great to have him back."

Spoon said he was returning to play another year because he had many goals left to achieve.

"Some people were asking if I was coming back for another shot at the Butkus or All-American team," Spoon said.

"That doesn't matter. I want to win. That's the most important thing to me."

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