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The Daily Tar Heel SPORTS

John Dunlap

Baseball already?

Down in Florida right now, a group of men are cleaning lockerrooms and mowing dew-covered grass. They are working in places like Winter Haven, Bradenton, West Palm Beach, and St. Petersburg.

The grass areas are diamond-shaped and are fringed by hard-packed clay. What they are doing in the relative warmth of February is preparing for the major league baseball season.

That's right, major league baseball-

By March baseball games will be going on in the Grapefruit League of Florida.

By April the teams will be narrowed down to the starting players. Opening day of the season will be played in the cold, damp weather of late winter in cities like Boston, New York, Philadelphia, Chicago, and Minneapolis-St. Paul.

And then it is upon us. Six full months of day-in and day-out baseball.

Spring training

Spring training means a good many things. It means baseball cards strong with the scent of sharp-cracking bubble gum. This year it means Hank Aaron in a Milwaukee Brewer uniform. It is questions unanswered, and a certain joy in the fact that questions can be asked at all. Joy that the Atlanta Braves are still in the pennant race, simply because the pennant race hasn't begun.

Still, spring training, with all its hope and rebirth, is a reminder that major league baseball is too long. Six months of baseball is just too much for anyone to take but the most avid fan.

Shorter season

A solution rests in shortening the season. A feasible beginning time for the regular baseball season is early in May. Spring training could begin in Florida around midto late March. The finish of the baseball season could be mid-September instead of early October.

The results of this shortening would provide the following beneficial aspects: with a shorter season the races for the pennants would be more exciting, more pressure-filled, and hopefully closer. Fan interest would be greater, average attendance higher, and finally the shorter season would keep baseball from conflicting

At this point in time the length of baseball combined with how poorly the sport comes across on television, is causing an incredible amount of apathy from the average sports

too much with football.

The sad part of all this is that baseball deserves better. The game can be exciting as well as complex. The sport is one to be watched in person, not on television.

But until the major league season is shortened, many are going to continue to feel apathy for a sport that is still alive and enjoyable. If baseball is shortened, like all pro sports should be, then maybe it will regain the popularity it deserves.

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Tar Heels top Gobblers renewed confidence after last Saturday's 22-For the Gobblers, who fell behind early by

Why UNC head basketball coach Dean Smith called his team's 87-75 victory over Virginia Tech, (VPI) "one of the best games we've played all season," may not be clearly

Afterall, the Gobblers are unranked nationally and often overshadowed by their fellow Virginians at Charlottesville, who UNC meets this Saturday in the first of three remaining conference games.

But the fact is: winning in Blacksburg, Va. is difficult amid the cup-throwing, loud VPI following that has seen its Gobblers, now 15-8, lose only twice at home this season, to South Carolina and Alabama, each by four

For Carolina to get the win, which gives it

point thrashing by nationally third-ranked Maryland, it took a masterful direction of the four-corners by freshman Phil Ford, with 10:45 left in the game.

After leading 53-47 at half, the Tar Heels see-sawed to a 65-57 score before going into the spread offense, which allowed them to outscore the aggressive VPI hosts 15-9

during the next eight minutes. Junior Mitch Kupchak led the Heels, who outrebounded VPI 40-32, with 24 points and 15 rebounds. Walter Davis shut off the potent scoring of another Davis, Russell Davis, who got only four points, while Walter had 14. Ford added 14 points and seven assists.

Shipman cited Duke's strength in

foilsman Carl Meyer and epeeist Charlie

King. "They have no one real outstanding,"

he said, "but they don't have any patsies,

performances, which Coach Ron Miller

called the worst of the season, Shipman said,

"I think that if we fence as well as we can,

The first bout gets underway at 7 p.m. A

This weekend, a North Carolina amateur

fencing tournament will begin at Woollen

Gym Friday as the state's best epeeists meet.

we'll win 20-7."

big crowd is expected.

Concerning Carolina's recent

13 points and got its closest at 27-28, guard Larry Cooke tallied 26 points, including the Gobblers' first 12.

Coach Smith praised Ford's four-corner execution, the defensive games of Kupchak on the boards and Davis on Davis and the team's offensive first-half movement, which battled head coach Don DeVoe's sticky

Gobbler defense. The 12-point UNC victory was also the biggest home loss margin for the Virginia Tech team since N.C. State beat them 78-63 during the 1969-70 season.

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The Old Book Corner **OPPOSITE NCNB PLAZA**

CHAPEL HILL, N. C. 27514

UNC fences Duke

by Grant Vosburgh Sports Writer

The UNC-Duke rivalry extends into fencing tonight as the Blue Devils visit Carmichael Auditorium. Although the women's match has been canceled, an exciting men's confrontation is in store. Carolina is tuning up for the Atlantic Coast Conference tournament, but has been a bit flat in its last two conference outings. As for Duke, well, as in basketball and football, you always discount records and reputations

when they face the Tar Heels. "Duke always fences better against us," graduate assistant Bill Shipman explained. "They fence so hard and so aggressive that they fence better than they are. The year before last, they gave us the only close home meet in the last two years by an ACC

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