



Tar Heel junior quarterback Matt Kupec  
...It's a lot more fun this year'

# 'It's incredible'

## Matt Kupec still amazed by quarterbacking ascent

By LEE PACE  
Sports Editor

Four Carolina quarterbacks sat around an Ehringhaus dormitory room one morning two years ago explaining to a reporter why each of them was any good or any bad and why Bill Dooley should consider each of them the best to spend the fall handing the ball off to Mike Voight, and, if they ate all of their peas and carrots, throw an occasional pass.

John Stratton, at the moment, was the best of the four. A broken wrist would have something to say about that, though, later in the week.

Clyde Christensen was just in from Fresno City, (Calif.) Junior College, and was new to the Carolina system. He didn't play all year.

P.J. Gay would have been there, only it was difficult for him to get around with his knee mashed up and all. Bernie Menapace hadn't played any the year before because of a foot injury, and had only been moved to quarterback from defensive back a few days earlier. He would start five games at quarterback in 1976 before being moved to the bench and then back to defense.

The other quarterback was Matt Kupec, a freshman in eligibility. The brother of former Tar Heel Chris Kupec, Matt injured his knee after two weeks of preseason work in 1975, took a medical drop and seriously considered not coming back to Chapel Hill. But when it became his chance to speak that morning, he squelched any rumors that Carolina was rid of the Kupec family.

"Yeah, I'm here, here to stay for four years," Kupec said. "I hope to play some jayvee ball this year and just learn the system."

He learned the system, all right. Two months later he started his first game against N.C. State, and has been No. 1 ever since.

Today Matt Kupec looks at the situation with an expected amount of wonder.

"It's incredible," he said last weekend. "Stratton was a junior then, so I figured I'd be fighting for the



starting spot this year, my junior year. But I've already started now for almost two years."

Kupec could start for two more years. He and Clyde Christensen currently are fighting for the No. 1 position, but Kupec feels that no matter who starts, the UNC quarterback will be much more active this fall than he has been in the past.

In Dooley's I-formation, the quarterback had much less responsibility than most quarterbacks. Kupec threw 105 passes last fall, most of them on sprint-outs, and completed 59 of them. Wake Forest's Mike McGlamry threw 252 times. State's Johnny Evans threw 203 passes. Mike Dunn of Duke threw 191 times, and Steve Fuller of Clemson threw 205 times.

"It really got frustrating last year," Kupec said. "I had some injuries, I wasn't passing any and wasn't contributing."

But with the veer offense that coach Dick Crum has installed, Kupec sees the quarterback playing a much more important role.

"It's a lot more fun this year," he said. "It's a better opportunity to be productive. As a quarterback you love to throw the ball. Coach Crum has said we'll throw the ball maybe 20 or 25 times a game."

The switch from a sprint-out passer to a drop-back thrower is a big adjustment for Kupec, but one he's happy to make.

"Drop-back passing is totally different," Kupec

said. "We usually have five people out on patterns. If you can't find someone open, you can hit a back in the flat. A five-yard pass to a running back can turn into a long touchdown run. It really puts pressure on the defensive secondary."

Last season Kupec was bothered off and on by a bruised shoulder and knee and missed one game, a 10-7 loss to Texas Tech. And although those injuries have healed, Kupec feels the dangerous nature of the veer will allow at least two quarterbacks to get plenty of playing time.

"In the veer the quarterback gets hit a lot more. I think you'll see two quarterbacks play a lot. Clyde will see a lot more action. In the veer the quarterback takes a beating. And we're not the strongest people in the world. But you can't do to much about injuries. If you start thinking about getting injured you may as well hang up your cleats."

Kupec was almost ready to hang his cleats up three years ago after he fell to the practice field with torn ligaments. One of seven children of a high school principal in Syosset, N.Y., Kupec found the distance from home and the pain in his knee too much for a freshman to handle.

"I was a long way from home, I was new here, it was the first time I was away from home," Kupec said. "That fall when I was home I looked at some schools closer to home and thought about transferring. But in January, I decided to come back here."

Kupec still has frequent contact with brother Chris, who set several school passing records in 1974, his senior year. The two brothers have spent many hours over the years running pass patterns for each other.

"He's good to talk to," the younger brother said. "He's in law school here. I talk to him a lot on the phone. He's got a really good ear. He's sympathetic. He's been through it also. He knows the right things to say."

In 1978, though, Matt Kupec hopes he won't need any help from anybody.

## Bear cautious in assessing Alabama victory

BIRMINGHAM, Ala. (AP)—Even after an impressive 20-3 triumph over 10th-ranked Nebraska, Alabama coach Bear Bryant still isn't convinced that the Crimson Tide is the No. 1 college football team in the nation.

"We're still nowhere near where we were at the end of last year," Bryant said in the wake of the season-opening victory Saturday night. "We're much better on defense but we're just as far behind on offense."

That might seem like an unusual assessment. True, top-rated Alabama's stingy defense limited the dangerous Cornhuskers to 110 yards rushing and 64 passing, but the Crimson Tide's offense rolled up 264 yards on the ground and 54 through the air.

However, 55 yards of the 318-yard total came on a first-period drive that ended in a missed field goal attempt and 99 more were reeled off in a seven-minute, 16-play second-quarter march capped by a

four-yard scoring pass from Jeff Rutledge to Major Ogilvie.

"We had the ball more but didn't score that much, which speaks highly of their defense," Bryant said. "Our defense gave us the ball enough to win a lot of games."

Rutledge, the goat of the 31-24 loss to Nebraska last year when he suffered his only five interceptions of the season, completed only five of 13 attempts, but his touchdown pass gave Alabama a 7-3 lead. Tony Nathan scored from the two in the third period after Don McNeal intercepted a pass at the Nebraska 39 and a three-yard run by Rutledge with 2:17 left sealed the victory after Jeff Quinn, Nebraska's second-string quarterback, fumbled.

The 'Bama defense was keyed by tackle Marty Lyons, nose guard Curtis McGriff, ends E.J. Junior and Wayne Hamilton, and linebackers Barry Krauss, Rich Wingo and Rickey Gilliland.

Meanwhile, Temple almost upset third-ranked Penn State Friday night. The Nittany Lions needed a 23-yard field goal by Matt Bahr, a professional soccer player with one year of college football eligibility remaining, with 10 seconds remaining to win 10-7.

"We were lucky," said Penn State coach Joe Paterno. "Temple defended us well."

In other results Saturday: North Texas State 49, Texas-El Paso 0; Tulsa 21, Arkansas State 20; Mississippi State 28, West Texas State 0; East Carolina 14, Western Carolina 6; Northern Michigan 30, Eastern Michigan 3; Southern Mississippi 10, Richmond 7; Drake 25, Texas-Arlington 23; South Carolina State 47, Virginia State 0; East New Mexico 42, Sul Ross State 0; Morgan State 13, Maryland-Eastern Shore 10; Northern Iowa 15, Wisconsin-Whitewater 12; Tennessee State 13, Middle Tennessee 6; Nicholls State 20, Tennessee Tech 10.



Alabama's Bear Bryant  
...his team won opener

## Dye: Pirate win a 'comedy of errors'

From Wire Reports

GREENVILLE — More than 31,000 East Carolina fans, the largest home crowd in Pirate history, cheered their team to a 14-6 victory over Western Carolina Saturday, but ECU coach Pat Dye, who must ready his team for N.C. State this Saturday and Carolina the next, wasn't cheering.

"Oh me, you don't have to be an Einstein to figure this one out," he said. "It was a very frustrating night, a comedy

of errors from a football team that lacked a killer instinct."

Western Carolina and coach Bob Waters were the winners. Dye said, "He got more out of their players than we got out of ours," he said.

"We were just not a polished football team. It was a comedy of errors. We played like we didn't know each other."

It was a difficult night for the Pirate offense, plagued by fumbles, dropped passes, penalties and interference, not to mention a tougher-than-expected Catamount defense.

ECU quarterback Leander Green, usually a slippery runner, ended up with nine yards on 13 carries.

"Normally, you play like you practice," Dye grumbled, "and that's the way it was. We were terrible Monday, salvaged something Tuesday and were terrible again Wednesday and Thursday offensively."

After grabbing an early 7-0 lead, the Pirates could have buried the Catamounts, who fumbled inside their 24-yard line three times in the first half and had two passes intercepted.

But the offense could not cash in. Instead, two field goal attempts were blocked and ECU couldn't score again until Green hit Ray Washington for a 60-yard touchdown pass in the fourth quarter.

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