

Wolfpack offers a critical test for Tar Heels

Dean Smith said after his North Carolina basketball team lost to Virginia 63-57 in Charlottesville Saturday that he thinks tonight's UNC-N.C. State game is a very important one for his young team.

Smith, of course, would say that about a game with North Dakota State Methodist College for the Oppressed's jayvees because teams like Old Dominion, who shocked DePaul this weekend, cannot be taken for granted.

But Smith's comments are especially true on this occasion. Tonight's game is a very big one, one the Tar Heels need to win very badly.

"I am sincerely worried about North Carolina State," Smith said after his team had fallen to the second-ranked Cavaliers. "Our team played with a great amount of poise today and it will be hard for us, coming off this disappointing loss."

Just a week ago, the Heels were in a similarly critical situation. The team had been in a baffling shooting drought and had lost two straight games. The losses to Minnesota and Kansas brought the Tar Heels into the Atlantic Coast Conference schedule on a slide that, quite possibly, could have led to four or more losses in a row.

But Carolina managed a big, big win over Maryland in Carmichael Wednesday night and suddenly the picture brightened. The win over the league's preseason favorites boosted the confidence and the won-lost record of the then-struggling Tar Heels.

"I am pleased with our progress," Smith said after the 75-66 win over the Terps. "I think we have done well to go through our first 13 games and come out with only three losses."

Tonight's game between two of ACC basketball's most successful rivals is only the fourth game for North Carolina in Carmichael this season. The Tar Heels have been to Alaska, Los Angeles, Kansas and to Greensboro and Charlotte to play. The schedule has included games (and wins) against Georgetown, Arkansas, Louisville, Indiana and Kansas as well as the losses to Wake Forest, Kansas, Minnesota and Virginia.

In short, the pace so far has been maddening for the 10-4 Tar Heels, ranked 17th in one wire service poll. Things won't get any easier, of course. The ACC league schedule is in full swing, with the State game coming third in a string of nine consecutive conference games.

David Poole

"I think our schedule will help us later," Smith said. "I don't know that any team could have gone through our schedule and come out with only four losses. I'm very happy with the way we've played because I wasn't sure how our team would respond."

Which all leads up to tonight. If the Tar Heels are to contend for the league title, they must win all their home games. It is as simple as that. A home loss or two might just decide the whole thing in the league this year.

But more than that, this game is State's fifth league contest and the fourth ACC game it has played on the road. The Wolfpack had Maryland on the ropes at

College Park but lost, then fell at Clemson and Virginia before winning at home Saturday night over Georgia Tech. The Pack is no stranger to the road and new coach Jim Valvano has a talented crew. State can and most likely will face a tough foe.

UNC's loss to Virginia will make it even tougher. The Heels led 26-12 in the first half and had the Cavs baffled with a sagging, middle-clogging zone that cut off access to Ralph Sampson while conceding perimeter shots.

Those perimeter shots didn't fall for Virginia in the first half. The Tar Heels led 33-22 at the break and by as many as 13 in the second half. But with four fouls on Al Wood and Virginia making a spirited comeback, the Tar Heels went to Four Corners.

"We spread it out hoping that if we made them chase us, their legs would go and they'd miss some shots," Smith said. The Cavaliers hit 10 of 11 perimeter shots down the stretch and the only miss was tapped in by Sampson to give Virginia a 52-51 lead.

"They set an all-time record for a half against us with 1.32 points per possession," Smith said. The Cavs scored 18 of the last 19 times they had the basketball.

The bright spot for Carolina was the play of Mike Pepper, who had 14 points and hit several key baskets. Smith called Al Wood's play sensational and the Gray, Ga., senior seems to have shaken a shooting slump that had people wondering what was up. Wood was 3-for-17 in the loss to Minnesota in the finals of the Winston Tire Classic in Los Angeles.

"I am very pleased with the play of the team this season," Smith said. "I hope we continue to improve. That's what we've been trying to do."



Carolina's Mike Pepper looks for pass ... senior guard's play improving steadily

Wrestlers' second loss 'embarrassing' to Lam

By GEOFFREY MOCK
Staff Writer

North Carolina wrestling coach Bill Lam expected a tough match out of nationally ranked Northern Iowa, but nothing prepared him for the 40-5 licking the Panthers inflicted on the Tar Heels Monday in Carmichael.

"That's the worst I've ever been beaten before," Lam said. "It was pretty hard to take. I'm not so disappointed in losing, but in the way we lost. Dave Cooke and Bob Shriner were the only two kids who fought hard."

Lam attributed some of the problems to the youth of the squad. He started seven freshmen and Cooke was the only returning starter from last year's undefeated team.

"A young team isn't going to be consistent," he said. "We didn't wrestle well in terms of fundamentals, but we also didn't fight. I can accept a team wrestling poorly if they fight hard, but we didn't do either. I don't want the team to represent the University this way."

Coming off a close 28-14 defeat to 13th-ranked Auburn, Lam said before the Panther match that he was pleased with the team's progress, but Northern Iowa represents a step back. "We over respected them. You have to be aggressive. It's the nature of the sport. We were tired in some matches just from nervousness. Nervous energy wears you out as much as physical."

The schedule does not get easier for the Tar Heels. They run into two more nationally ranked teams — Navy and N.C. State — in the next eight days and Lam said some changes would be made to correct the mistakes he saw against Northern Iowa.

"We'll make adjustments. We may not have a good team, but we won't have anybody lying down. I would rather forfeit a weight than that. We'll have some good matches. We just have to be more consistent and we'll get better. Jack Parry will be back next week at heavyweight (from the football team) and freshmen like Shriner and (Bill) Gaffney are coming along well."



N. Iowa wrestler takes charge ... Heels lost 40-5

Lam said he was also looking forward to the return of defending Atlantic Coast Conference champion Jan Michaels who missed both the Auburn and Northern Iowa meets with torn cartilage and ligaments in his right knee.

The Tar Heels' most consistent performer has been Cooke at 126 pounds. Ranked fifth in the nation after returning from the Midlands tournament with a fifth-place finish, Cooke justified the rank with a 10-1 upset of Auburn's All-America Tony Leonino and 13-1 victory over Doug Tredway for the Tar Heels' only win against the Panthers.

The loss to Auburn ended Carolina's 25 dual-meet winning streak, one of the longest in the nation. Although the Tigers dominated the Carolina Open with six individual titles, Carolina made it close with several upsets in the lightweights.

"Auburn was closer than the score indicated," Lam said. "We had momentum after (Wes) Hallman and Cooke won the first two matches, but then we lost it at 134 and 142."

Upset Texas

By SCOTT PETERSON
Assistant Sports Editor

Turnovers and fouls have plagued the North Carolina women's basketball team in the new year as the Tar Heels have dropped four of six games, despite defeating Penn State and eighth-ranked Texas.

The Tar Heels, 5-4 before the break, stood at 7-8 before Tuesday night's matchup with East Carolina at Carmichael Auditorium.

"We had some good practices and everybody was rested and mentally ready to play," Coach Jennifer Alley said of the Tar Heels, who split with Pittsburgh and Penn State on a northern road trip. "But, we couldn't seem to get going and didn't have the chemistry between the players on the court. We were very sluggish."

The Pitt Panthers handed North Carolina a 76-67 loss before the Tar Heels upset Penn State 82-79.

Turnovers and fouls especially hurt the Tar Heels in a three-game losing streak which included a 92-72 loss at the hands

Errors costly to Heels

of Illinois State at Carmichael and two losses in the Lady Rebel-Dial Classic in Mississippi. UNC lost 82-74 to Alabama-Birmingham and 81-80 to Vanderbilt.

"We had something like 33 turnovers and played sluggish against Illinois," Alley said. "We needed to win that one at home before going on the road to the Dial Tournament. In the Alabama game, we played even for the most part, then we had an eruption of turnovers and fouls. Once we started that, frustration set in and we could not create a break for ourselves."

Fouls were again the nemesis of the Tar Heels in a one-point loss to Vanderbilt. With the game tied at 80-80, a foul shot with three seconds remaining was the difference in the game. One Vanderbilt player went to the foul line 16 times, converting on 14.

"Before we played Texas, we talked about the problems and we are concentrating on correcting them. I thought the girls did a good job on that, cutting the turnovers by one-third and keeping their alertness and composure at the end," Alley said of the Tar Heels' 75-73 win

over Texas. "Things are starting to click. It's just a matter of getting stability and consistency. We've got a good field goal percentage, but we've been giving up our opportunities for points on turnovers. The girls are aware of this and are beginning to communicate on the court. Once you realize you are losing because of this and not because you are not a good team, you begin to work on it."

Alley's squad has had its ups and downs this year, but nothing like the roller coaster style of play the Tar Heels exhibited in their last six games.

"We were not supposed to beat Texas or Penn State," Alley said. "But, we were supposed to beat Pittsburgh, Alabama (at Birmingham) and Vanderbilt. It's just a matter of keeping your senses and not panicking. We are sticking with one starting lineup to give us more stability. We felt the stability that the starting five would have knowing that they were going to start would help us. We initiated that in the Texas game and it seems to be working."

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