

# SPORTS

## Punting game remains uncertain; Hayes, Sharpe vie for position

By STEPHANIE GRAHAM

For the first time in three years, the UNC football team is without a regular punter. Following the graduation of Steve Streater, an all-ACC choice in 1980, the job is open and two players are battling for the position.

Jeff Hayes, a senior kicking specialist, and Chuck Sharpe, a former quarterback who was sidelined last year by a knee injury, apparently are the most likely candidates to inherit Streater's position. Both punted in the spring football game and—after both kicked well—the Tar Heel coaching staff was still undecided.

During his freshman season, Hayes split the punting duties with Streater and compiled a respectable average though Streater eventually took over the position full-time. As a high school punter, however, Hayes has the experience, and as a placekicker—he has the leg.

Though Sharpe has never kicked in a college game, he was listed as a possible backup punter last season before he tore the medial collateral ligament in his left knee just two weeks prior to the team's opener with Furman. In the 1980 spring game he had impressed many observers after booting the ball for a 43.7 average.

While Hayes is firmly ensconced as the team's No. 1 placekicker, Sharpe's future is a bit more uncertain. After splitting the quarterbacking duties with Matt Kupec his freshman year and appearing in six games his sophomore season, he was tabbed as the probable starter last year.

Preseason knee surgery gave the job to then sophomore Rod Elkins, however, and after Elkins' outstanding performance last season, Coach Dick Crum is searching for a new position for Sharpe.

the defensive secondary, but because of his injury was unable to participate in full contact drills.

Hayes, on the contrary, is anticipating another fine season as the Tar Heel's kicking specialist. A starter since his freshman year, he already holds several school and conference records. Besides breaking the ACC mark for most consecutive successful extra points—a record which saw him make every attempt in 1979—he also holds UNC marks for completing the most field goals over 40 yards for a freshman, for a season and for a career. He is probably best known for the 47-yarder he kicked with 13 seconds left to tie East Carolina in 1979.

Hayes is just as respected for his strength as he is for his accuracy. His kickoffs consistently carry through the endzone, often allowing UNC's opponents no better starting position than their own 20 yardline.

Still, Hayes would like to supplement his placekicking duties with some punting this season and he has been kicking on his own throughout the summer.

"I have been kicking and punting well lately," Hayes said. "Chuck has been practicing too, and he is punting real well right now."

Though kicking the ball puts a lot of stress on the leg, Hayes, a soccer-style kicker from Elkin, denies that the extra punting would weaken his leg.

"There is really no more pressure with punting," he said. "Placekicking is much more stressful."

A good athlete and excellent runner, the Burlington native has also played tailback and once rushed for over 100 yards from the quarterback slot his freshman year. Still the presence of Kelvin Bryant rules out a starting job there.



Chuck Sharpe



Jeff Hayes

In this, his senior season, a second position would certainly further Hayes' chances for a professional career. His strong leg has already attracted the attention of some NFL scouts, but he knows only too well how difficult it is for a kicker to break into the pro ranks. A second position would increase his value.

"Sure, it would help," Hayes said. "But it is a little early to be talking about pro ball."

Hayes has to face the fact, however, that the only placekicker ever drafted in the first round was Russell Erxeleben, of Texas—a kicker and punter.

Sharpe and Hayes both want the job, and Crum feels both are qualified to retain the excellent punting game the team enjoyed the past three years under Streater. With Sharpe, who was redshirted last season, now healthy, the performances of both players in the upcoming practice sessions should decide who will be the Tar Heel's punter for 1981.

Whatever the decision, though it will be tough for anyone to follow Streater, it appears the position will be in good hands when the team opens against East Carolina on September 12.

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