

Kessler putting Heels into ACC contention

By B. A. VELLIQUETTE
Staff Writer

No, golfer Kandi Kessler didn't throw her putter into the garbage after the Duke Spring Invitational two weeks ago. But she probably felt like it.

Although she's considered one of the top amateurs in the country, Kessler's score at Duke was a reflection of an inconsistent putter.

So, for the season's final tournament, which will determine the ACC champion and could also decide which teams receive bids to the NCAA tournament, Kessler has been spending more time than usual with her putter.

This weekend, Kessler and the rest of the Tar Heel women's golf team will be meeting Duke, N.C. State and Wake Forest for the ACC championship at Campbell College's Keith Hills Golf Course in Buies Creek.

"A win here would almost assure us of a bid to the nationals," said coach Dot Gunnells. The Tar Heels were

ranked 13th in the last poll. The top 17 teams will receive bids to the NCAA tournament.

Two weeks ago at the Duke Spring Invitational, UNC won both the individual and team titles over a field that included the same teams they will play at Keith Hills, but the Tar Heels' margin of victory was small.

"I feel like our win at Duke helps us to have a positive attitude. We know we can beat the other teams," Gunnells said. "But it's going to be close, very close."

One advantage the Tar Heels will have is the course itself. "It's a long golf course, and it's very demanding," Kessler said. "It's a really good golf course for me." Kessler is known for her long drives, as are her teammates.

So for Kessler and her links comrades it's only a matter of putting it all together. "If they can all play well on the same day, we could be awesome," Gunnells said.

Tennis dropped by Duke

By MIKE MACKAY
Staff Writer

Vengeance belonged to the Blue Devils in the first round of the ACC tennis championships in Raleigh on Thursday. Avenging a mid-season loss, Duke played like hellenian hounds as they swept the singles and scorched the Tar Heels, 6-3.

Threatening gray skies at 9 a.m. were an omen of singles to come for UNC. At the number one spot, Jeff Hersch outduelled Jeff Chambers in a rain-delayed backcourt battle 7-5, 6-7, 6-1. Tom Frisher avenged an earlier loss to David Pollack at the number two position with a 6-3, 7-6 victory that featured devil-influenced weather. After fighting back from 2-5 to 5-5 in the second set, Pollack lost his momentum when the tie breaker was interrupted by rain for over an hour.

Ricky Peck also got revenge as Mark DeMattheis had one of his worst matches of the year and was blistered 6-1, 6-2. Keith Kambourian overcame a strong effort by Jimmy Weibaecher to post a 6-4, 6-4 victory at number four. The story was similar for the Tar Heels in the fifth spot, as Bob Williams played consistently to down Jon Coss 6-1, 6-3.

Koley Keel came close to giving UNC a singles victory when he went up a break in the third set. But the storm of Duke victories continued as Scott Suhrer won going away 6-2, 6-7, 6-2.

The weather remained overcast for doubles, but the results were more striking than the difference between night and day as the Tar Heels won

all three matches. "We had a talk before doubles about gaining respect even though the match was officially over," Coach Morris said. "We said we could win the matches, and our players went out and did it."

The number one team of Chambers and DeMattheis continued their regular season form with a 7-6, 6-3 victory over Hersch and Peck. Pollack and Weibaecher had the strongest showing for the Tar Heels as they dumped the misnamed tandem of Kambourian and Williams 6-3, 6-3. At number three, Coss and Keel outlasted Frisher and Suhrer 4-6, 6-2, 7-6.

Morris said the doubles results exemplified the effort his team has put forth all year. "They haven't given in to anybody and I am very proud of what they have accomplished," he said. "I have had more fun watching these guys improve over the year than I've had in any other year of coaching."

Heels nip Pirates in tenth

By MIKE BERARDINO
Staff Writer

One pitch. One swing. One win. That's what happened when Howard Freiling stepped to the plate for North Carolina in the bottom of the 10th inning Thursday night at Boshamer Stadium. Freiling's first-pitch, two-out single to center scored Brian Chandler from second base and gave the Tar Heels a 6-5 win over East Carolina.

"I just looked for a first-pitch fastball and made sure I swung early enough," Freiling said. "It was right in the heart of the plate."

An error by ECU first baseman Mike Sullivan set up Freiling's game-winning heroics. After Chandler coaxed a one-out walk from ECU's Craig Van Deventer (7-1), Jim Stone laid down a sacrifice bunt that third baseman Mark Cockrell fielded. Sullivan mishandled Cockrell's one-hop throw to first, allowing Stone to reach safely. Darin Campbell then flew out to center, leaving it up to Freiling.

"I said to myself I had nothing to lose and everything to gain," Freiling said. "When I hit it, I knew it was going to fall." The 6-4 lefty-swinging sophomore from Philadelphia had entered the game in the top of the 10th as a defensive replacement and was batting just .239 coming into the game.

The unearned run made a winner of Gordon Douglas (3-2) and spoiled a fine effort by Van Deventer, who pitched 3 2/3 innings of two-hit relief for coach Gary Overton's Pirates. ECU, which beat the Tar Heels 9-6 on April 10 in Greenville, dropped to 30-5 on the year while North Carolina improved to 23-13.

After his team's seventh win in eight games, UNC coach Mike Roberts was understandably pleased. "Over the span of the last 10 days, this is the best we've played all year," Roberts said. "The thing I liked most was that it was a real team effort."

Indeed, without strong relief (one run over the last seven innings) from the boys in blue, the game might have belonged to East Carolina. While UNC could manage only five hits over the last five innings, Ken Turner (2 2/3 innings) and David Trautwein (2 1/3) kept the Pirates off the basepaths and the Tar Heels in the game.

Winfred Johnson, who started and pitched three innings for ECU, got things started with a sacrifice fly in the first inning that UNC's Devy Bell answered with a solo homer to left in the second. The Pirates then erupted for three runs off UNC starter Bill Robinson in the third. A walk and three singles made it 4-1 in favor of the visitors.

But back came the Tar Heels. Scott Johnson hit a two-run, two-out shot over the right-field fence and Matt Merullo scored Bell from first with an RBI double to tie it at four after three innings. Johnson's homer was the 38th of his career, one short of UNC's all-time leader Pete Cumiega (1980-83). A Mike Jedziniak sacrifice fly in the fourth put the Tar Heels up briefly, at 5-4, until ECU's Johnson drove home his third run of the game with a double in the fifth.

Now North Carolina must gear up for crucial conference road games with Clemson on Saturday and Georgia Tech on Sunday.

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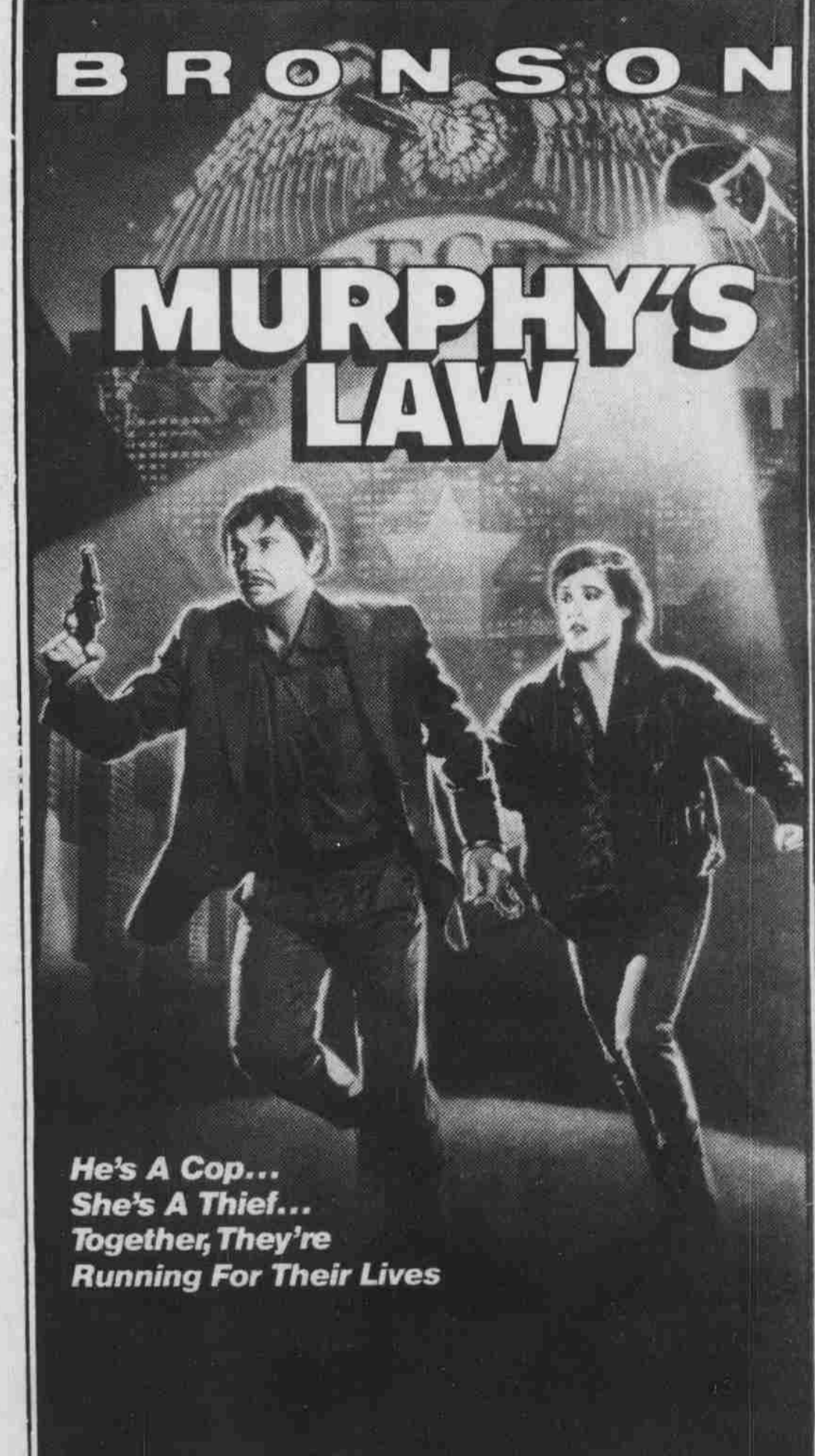


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