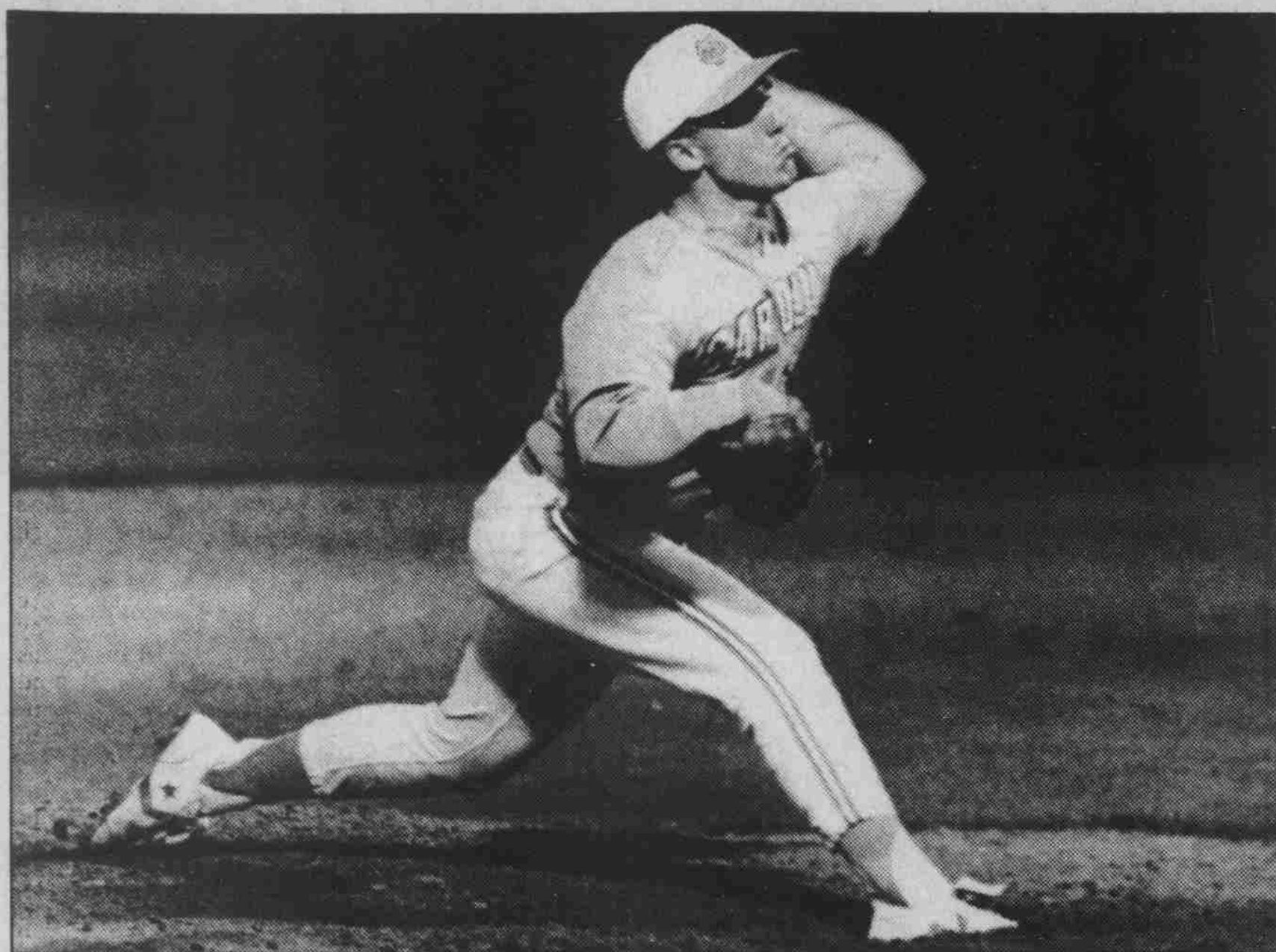


Sports



North Carolina reliever Rich Fernandez delivers a pitch during Wednesday's 5-3 loss to UNC-W

Grand slam dumps Heels

By JAMIE ROSENBERG
Assistant Sports Editor

Only two swings of the bat were involved in all eight runs scored Wednesday night in Boshamer Stadium.

Unfortunately for North Carolina, both swings belonged to visiting UNC-Wilmington — and both were home runs, leading the Seahawks to a 5-3 non-conference victory.

While the Tar Heels yawned home their three runs on walks, hit batters and an occasional single, UNC-W needed just a solo blast from first baseman Tim Hooks in the second inning and a grand slam by shortstop Trent Mongero in the third.

Both taters came off North Carolina starter Frank Maney (3-1), who was charged with all five runs, all four Seahawk hits, a walk and two hit batters.

"I thought he (Maney) was very timid on the mound," UNC coach Mike Roberts said. "Since the Clemson game, he seems to have backed off as an aggressive pitcher."

After Hooks tagged a 1-1 pitch just

over left fielder Todd Nichols' glove for the Seahawks' first run, Maney plunged into a nightmarish third inning. He began by walking catcher Al Frank Catucci. Then he gave up a single to third baseman Joe Catalano and hit second baseman Mark Chamberlain for the second time to load the bases. Mongero then smacked Maney's first pitch deep to left field, not even close to Nichols' glove.

As the Seahawks sat back with a 5-1 lead after three innings, they seemed to spot the Tar Heels a few extra runs — just to make it close.

UNC scored its first run in the bottom of the second when designated hitter Scott Hughes walked with the bases loaded, forcing in center fielder Tom Nevin.

That gift came from UNC-W starter and winner David Morrison (5-1). Reliever Keith Jarman continued the generosity in the sixth by plunking Hughes in the back with the bases full and then walking catcher Jesse Levis to push another run

across. "Until we start swinging the bat, it's hard to know if we're going to win every day," Roberts said. "It makes it a difficult game because of a lack of offensive support."

While North Carolina hitters took whatever the Seahawks would give them, Tar Heel relievers fared quite well. Rich Fernandez replaced Maney with none out in the third and proceeded to strike out nine of the first 13 batters to face him. Over five innings of work, Fernandez didn't allow a hit and walked just two.

Jim Dougherty pitched the final two innings for UNC and retired all six batters to face him.

With Wednesday's loss, North Carolina dropped to 19-9 on the season. The Tar Heels, 8-2 in the ACC, fell to 11-7 in non-conference play.

"We just struggle against non-conference teams," Roberts said. "I wish we could remedy that, but we haven't been able to yet."

"It's a motivational problem, without a doubt."

UNC women finish off Pack

By SCOTT GOLD
Staff Writer

It was well worth the wait. After rain delays, snow delays, cold delays and what-the-heck-how-about-one-more-delay delays, UNC's women's tennis match against N.C. State was finally played.

The match, originally scheduled for last Wednesday, finally started on Tuesday, but was called after a few games due to weather.

Wednesday, however, North Carolina basked in the rare sun and blew away the Wolfpack 8-1, winning all six singles matches and two out of three in doubles.

The victory put the Tar Heels one step closer to that magic .500 mark that has been so elusive this season. The squad improved its regular season record to 11-12.

Coach Kitty Harrison was obviously pleased with the victory.

"State has a good team," she said. "They gave us great competition. I thought our team looked strong today, too. I'm very pleased with our performance. I think our confidence is higher now than it has been in a while."

UNC started out Wednesday's match a little slowly, indicated by the three tie-breakers needed to settle first-set disputes. The Tar Heels won them all, however, leaving them with momentum for the second sets, which they quickly put away, sealing the win.

The match was the second stop on the comeback trail for tri-captain Ann Stephenson, who injured her ankle on the team's trip to California in mid-March. Stephenson's game, though limited to the baseline more than usual, was still powerful enough to wipe out State's Susan Saunders, 6-2, 6-0.

Stephenson played strong, though she still wears a brace. She appeared a little tentative in her lateral movement.

"She looks good," Harrison said, "but she's still not 100 percent. She had a little twist in (Monday's) Wake Forest match, but it looks like it's going to be fine."

First seed Gina Goblirsch looked sensational against the Wolfpack's Katie Fleming. Though the 6-4, 6-2 tally does not necessarily show it,

Goblirsch was in the driver's seat throughout the match.

The win was her team-leading 21st this season against 11 losses.

Other winners for the Tar Heels included second seed Spencer Barnes, 7-6, 6-4, fourth seed Valerie Farmer, 7-6, 6-0, fifth seed Dana Kanell, 6-1, 6-3, and sixth seed Gigi Neely, 6-6, 6-0. Both the first and third seed doubles teams also won.

Though the match does not count in the official ACC standings, it does place the team in an excellent mental state before the upcoming tournament starting on April 14. UNC is the fifth seed and will play Wake Forest in the opening round.

"The tournament is really wide open," Harrison said. "Whoever stays consistent wins. There really isn't a clear number one. This match really seals our confidence."

Thoden or Bankhead? Heels' ace fools more than just hitters

By JAMIE ROSENBERG
Assistant Sports Editor

If you managed to brave the mud Saturday and come out for the baseball game against Maryland in Boshamer Stadium, you may have thought you were watching some sort of alumni reunion.

After all, as the Tar Heels swamped the Terps, 7-3, North Carolina pitching star Scott Bankhead reigned on the mound, giving up just five hits, walking only one batter and striking out eight in a rain-shortened seven-inning game.

Wait a minute. That couldn't have been Bankhead. He's in the pros now. In fact, he wasn't even close to UNC on Saturday; he was in sunny Southern California watching his Seattle Mariners trash the California Angels, 7-0.

So who was that pitcher? He certainly looked like Bankhead. Bankhead stands 5-foot-11 and weighs 175 pounds; this guy is 5-11, 170. He threw like Bankhead, with a fluid, polished delivery and unfailing control.

And his stats look like Bankhead's. Bankhead went 11-0 his junior year; this guy is 6-0 and counting.

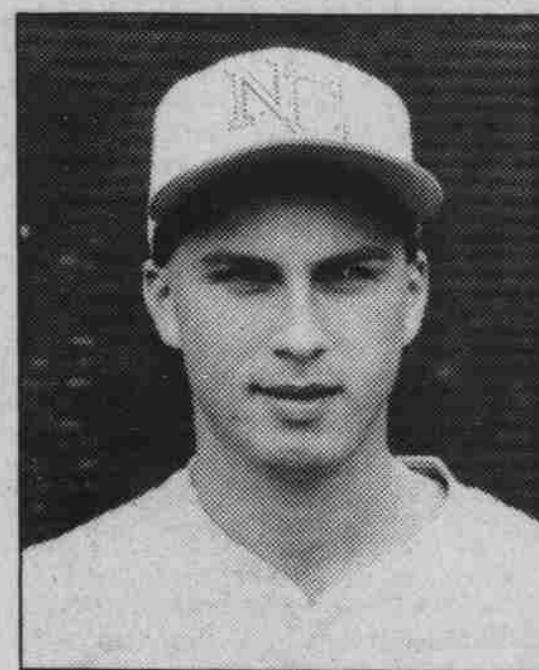
Well, further investigation revealed that Saturday's mystery pitcher was actually John Thoden, a junior right-hander from Medford, N.Y., who has been unstoppable since late last season, and who is comparable to his predecessor in strikingly many ways.

"I think John has a lot of similarities to Scott Bankhead," UNC head coach Mike Roberts said. "Size-wise, they're fairly close. Scott is a little stronger in the upper body."

"They both have excellent mechanics, and excellent mechanics brings consistency. Scott Bankhead had three pitches he could throw for strikes at any count, and I think John Thoden has enough confidence in his fastball, his curveball and his change-up to throw them at almost any count."

"I think the final thing is that they both throw strikes," Roberts continued, "and if you throw strikes and stay ahead in the count and walk very few people, then you're going to be a consistent winner at this level."

Thoden's numbers certainly don't



John Thoden

betray the comparisons. Already at 6-0 with a 2.15 ERA after ten starts, he is the ace in the Tar Heel rotation, leading the team in innings pitched (71), complete games (5) and strikeouts (53). He has also given up just 11 walks all season, making his ratio of strikeouts to walks a phenomenal 4.8.

Needless to say, Thoden should be following in Bankhead's footsteps real soon. Major league teams can draft college players after their junior year, and Thoden will probably be on a minor league roster this summer.

"I think there are two players that are a hundred percent ready for pro baseball on this club," Roberts said. "And they are (catcher) Jesse Levis and John Thoden."

"I think John's ready to sign. Some pro scouts don't rate him extremely high because he doesn't throw as hard as, say, Scott Bankhead did. But I think he's an outstanding prospect because he's a polished pitcher, and there are very few polished pitchers in college baseball."

Thoden throws his fastball at around 83-85 mph, fairly slow for the big leagues. But he makes up for that with poise and control. "He can handle the routine, and he can get pro hitters out," Roberts said.

For Thoden, signing with a major league club has just been a matter of time. After his senior year at Patchogue-Medford High School near Long Island, he was drafted in the 15th round by his favorite team,

the New York Mets.

Thoden weighed his options and decided to get a start on a college education and hope to be drafted in a higher round later on. Now that "later on" is "now," he seems to be ready to accept a pro offer.

"I turned down the team that I've always dreamed of playing for to come here," Thoden said with a moderate Long Island accent. "And it seems that, if I do get drafted this year, it'll probably be one of my best chances to make that dream come true, to at least know that I have the chance to take advantage of the opportunity."

Thoden would not, of course, be able to finish up his industrial relations major if he went pro. But he does figure on graduating eventually. "It's just a matter of not graduating on time," he said. "I do plan to finish school and get a degree."

Thoden's pitching success at UNC started late last year. After finishing the regular season with a 5-3 record, he dominated in the ACC tournament, winning games against Virginia and Clemson and striking out 13 hitters in 14 innings. His groove continued into summer league play, in which he went 11-1 and was named the Cape Cod League's Pitcher of the Year.

As for this season, Thoden is reluctant to take all the credit.

"It hasn't been one specific thing that's enabled me to do so well," he said. "It's been a combination of things. Our team's played good defense the majority of the season, and in my games we've had some clutch hitting."

"If things work out, then the pitcher seems like he's the one who's doing well, but it's really a team effort."

Roberts, however, was not quite as humble. "John is the type of pitcher that doesn't beat himself," he said. "For John to really get behind in a game, I believe most of the time that we have to make mistakes behind him."

"I think he's capable of going through the year undefeated if we play good defense and score some runs. It doesn't have to be a lot."

Clemson, State sign recruits

From Associated Press reports

Clemson and North Carolina State signed players Wednesday, the first day of the spring signing period for college basketball, but a number of decisions remain to be made in the Atlantic Coast Conference.

Craig Tyson, a 6-foot-4 guard from Baltimore, signed with North Carolina State, joining the backcourt of Chris Corchiani and Rodney Monroe. Tyson averaged 26 points and 10 rebounds per game and was selected by the Baltimore Sun as the Metro player of the year in his final prep season.

Clemson signed 6-10 center Larry McCloud of Anderson (S.C.) Junior College and Steve Lastinger, a 6-foot, 150-pound guard from Atlanta, both of whom made oral commitments to the Tigers on Tuesday.

McCloud, a two-year starter for the Trojans, averaged 12 points and

nine rebounds a game.

Lastinger averaged 21 points and five assists a game as a senior at Lakeside High School.

Chris Havlicek, the son of former NBA great John Havlicek, and Doug Smith, a 6-1 guard from Fayetteville, Tenn., have committed to Virginia but put off signing with the Cavaliers until Friday, their coaches told the Winston-Salem Journal.

Virginia also is battling with North Carolina to win 6-7 All-America George Lynch of Roanoke, Va. Lynch, who scored 18 points and pulled down 22 rebounds in the McDonald's Capital Classic all-star game on March 29, visited North Carolina last weekend. Lynch, who attends Flint Hill Prep School in Oaktown, Va., is scheduled to visit Virginia this weekend.

North Carolina is also looking at Douglas Edwards, a 6-9 forward

from Miami. N.C. State is also trying to recruit Edwards, along with Louisville, Florida and Florida State. Edwards will probably not make his decision until May, according to Shakey Rodriguez, his high school coach.

North Carolina coach Dean Smith also is concentrating on the frontcourt, and he is looking at Kevin Salvadori, a 6-11 center from Pittsburgh. Salvadori helped Seton LaSalle High School to a 32-6 record in 1988 and the state Class 3-A championship, but drew only meager recruiting interest in the fall because he is underdeveloped. He weighs only 200 pounds and has just turned 17.

Duke and Georgia Tech signed all their players during the fall signing period.

Maryland signed four players in the fall and has a commitment from Robert Taylor, a 6-5 swingman from Memphis.

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