



DTH/Jennifer Griffin

Gina Goblirsch is one of just two seniors on the '90 women's tennis squad

Youth will be served

Talented freshman quartet hopes to net women's tennis top 20 spot

By ERIC WAGNON

Staff Writer

The North Carolina women's tennis team has already shown Southern Methodist that its 1990 edition may be stronger than last year's squad.

Despite the graduation of Vanessa Ames, Spencer Barnes and Ann Stephenson, this year's squad avenged a 9-0 loss to the Mustangs last year by defeating SMU 6-3 on Feb. 17. Each of the six Tar Heel wins in the contest went to three sets.

"They really had to dig deep to do that," UNC coach Kitty Harrison said. "In all my years of coaching, I don't know if I've seen us split (sets) on six (matches) and win all six."

"They have a lot more confidence. Now, they've just been able to put that conditioning and drill work all together and see it pay off."

Harrison, in her 14th season, must find a way to fill the void left by Stephenson's graduation at the No. 1 singles spot. Stephenson was a four-year letter winner for the Tar Heels, but missed part of her senior season

after injuring her ankle at a match in Provo, Utah. The match against SMU was scheduled for the day after her injury, and the impact of Stephenson's loss may have contributed to SMU's 9-0 romp.

Harrison has brought in a contingent of highly-ranked freshmen to form a team that could break into the top 20.

"If we continue as we have started out and fight as hard, then we certainly could be (in the top 20)," Harrison said.

Freshman Cinda Gurney, a hard hitter out of Candler, N.C., has quickly stepped into the No. 1 singles spot. Gurney is ranked 48th nationally and sixth in the Southeast Region. She has also teamed with senior Gina Goblirsch to form the nation's 21st-ranked doubles team.

"(Gurney) is perhaps the highest ranked player that has ever come in here, that I've ever recruited — No. 10 in the Girls 18's (in junior tennis)," Harrison said.

Freshman Alisha Portnoy has also

jumped into the top six in singles. Portnoy, a baseliner out of Northridge, Calif., is expected to compete in the No. 3 singles slot for the Tar Heels. Portnoy is ranked 29th in the Southeast region.

"She is just a scrappy player," Harrison said. "She moves well and just hangs in points. She's not afraid of three sets. She's just a great competitor."

Along with Gurney and Goblirsch, Portnoy and senior Valerie Farmer make up the other freshman-senior doubles tandem on the Tar Heel squad. Portnoy and Farmer went 6-5 in doubles action during the fall season.

Farmer said that she and Portnoy make up an unlikely but effective team.

"We're the two shortest players on the team. It's like the Munchkins or something," Farmer said. "Actually, we do pretty well. We both have the same type of game. We're both baseliners. We both need to work on

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