

SPORTS

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in the CarolinasTerrence
Basso
Sports Columnist

Spring is finally here and with it comes one of the greatest occurrences in the sports world. No, I'm not talking about baseball's opening day or March Madness, though those do have their merits. I'm talking about the much-overlooked slugfest that is the National Hockey League (NHL) playoffs.

The first round is already over but much of the general public has no idea that the Mighty Ducks of Anaheim swept the defending champion Detroit Red Wings right out of the tournament. March Madness did its yearly job of over-shadowing upsets like that.

It's a shame that so many people know Syracuse won the NCAA tournament but only a handful of hockey faithful can talk about the trouble the Minnesota Wild's game seven overtime win against Colorado. People are missing out on a great sport when they don't pay attention to hockey.

Turn on ESPN on any night this week and watch the third period of whatever game you tumble upon. Chances are that those 20 minutes will be more exciting than anything you're going to see on a baseball diamond. The pauses between play are short and usually few, the action is nonstop and the goalending performances are an art form.

Maybe you'll even get lucky and see a game that heads to overtime. Basketball overtime is exciting, but let's be honest, it's usually only the last 60 seconds that matter. That's not the case in hockey. Nothing else in sports compares to watching a team try to save its season in sudden death, which is a regular occurrence in the NHL this time of year.

No championship is more difficult to win either. Baseball has three rounds, one of which is a best-of-five series. March Madness has single games. The same goes for the NFL. To win the Stanley Cup a team has to get through four rounds, each a best-of-seven series.

All those games lead to intense rivalries that add to the thrill. Take, for instance, any recent series between the Red Wings and the Colorado Avalanche. Aside from intense play, there has been bench-clearing brawls including a bout between goalies and arguments between coaches while still behind the bench.

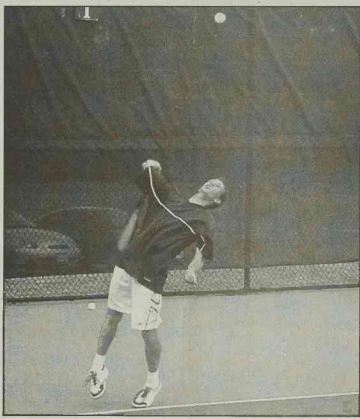
The fans get intensely into the rivalries as well. I have seen some wild fans at football and baseball games, but they don't compare to hockey fans. The rivalry between the New York Rangers and New Jersey Devils, for instance, brings fans into the game on a level unmatched by other sports. Friends and families, mine included, will be divided over the outcome of even the most trivial of games between the two teams.

If you're still not convinced to give hockey a try, consider that the games usually last about two hours and are usually a little longer during the playoffs. This isn't a four-hour baseball event. If you can sit through a football game or a little basketball, then you won't get bored during a hockey game.

An even better way to get to know the sport is to attend a game. It doesn't matter which team you see as long as you go. The smell of the ice, the enthusiasm of the fans and

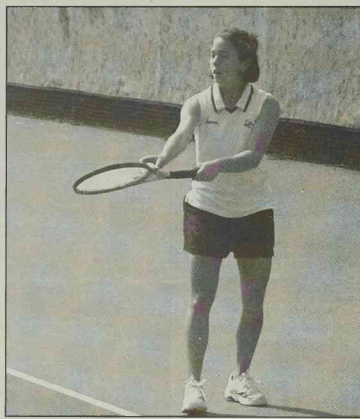
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UNCA tennis caps off season



ALAN AMBROSE/ONLINE EDITOR

UNCA sophomore Adam Branks (left) and senior Ashley Jones (right) helped lead the women's team triple their win total from last year. Branks was ranked as high as 111th in the nation.



ALAN AMBROSE/ONLINE EDITOR

played pivotal roles as the Bulldogs wound down their seasons. Jones was ranked as high as 111th in the nation.

Adam Brooks
Sports Reporter

The UNCA men and women's tennis teams brought home both wins and losses after two recent matches against Elon University Apr. 11 at the Powell Tennis Center, and at UNC-Wilmington Apr. 13.

The men's team scored a 4-3 victory over Elon, but proved unable to top UNC-Wilmington. The games brought the men's team to a season-ending record of 14-5. The women's team proved unable to win either match, although individual victories did come in for the Bulldogs. The games brought the women's team to a season-ending record of 7-10.

The women's team did bring in the doubles point for the Bulldogs. The doubles team of sophomore Natasha Lucki and junior Emily Acker-Estes defeated their opponents with a score of 8-6. Sophomore Oksana Zaluzhna and senior Ashley Jones also defeated their doubles opponents with an 8-4 win. Jones was the only player on the women's side to bring a singles victory with a 6-3, 6-0 victory over her Phoenix opponent.

"They've got a good team on the women's side," said Head Coach Chase Hodges. "We played well that match, they just had a few more weapons than us, were a little bit deeper with their line-up. They've got some good players over there. But all in all, I was happy with their performance."

The men's team brought in a 4-3 victory over the Elon Phoenix. Senior Alan Ambrose, freshman Paul Ambrose, sophomore Damian Mulhane, and junior Nick Neal all brought in singles wins for the "Dogs."

"On the men's side, we pulled out a big win over them," said Hodges. "We beat them 4-3. They're one of the top teams in the conference. They finished the regular season tied for second place, so that was a good win for us, gave us some confidence. Damian Mulhane clinched the match for us in a three and a half hour match. I was happy with his performance, he played well."

One doubles match win came in for the team from duo Paul Ambrose and Mulhane.

"It was the first match this season

where we lost the doubles point and actually came back and won the match with singles," said Hodges. "We won four of the six singles matches to win the point. That's very difficult to do against a good team, so we were happy to do that."

The UNC-Wilmington Seahawks emerged victorious over both the men's and women's teams. Zaluzhna captured the only singles victory for the Bulldogs for the women's side with a 6-3, 6-4 win. Zaluzhna and doubles partner Jones won their match with a score of 8-5.

"The women lost the match but played well. Oksana Zaluzhna played extremely well for us and got us a win against Wilmington. (Wilmington), like Elon, were just

a little bit deeper than us in the line-up," said Hodges.

For the men's team, Branks pulled in the only singles victory with a score of 6-2, 6-4. Paul Ambrose and Mulhane clinched a double victory over their Seahawks opponents with a score of 8-6.

"On the men's side, really I think the Elon match-up hurt us, playing the day before. It was such a long match, we really came out a little flat and didn't have our legs," said Hodges. "Wilmington had had two weeks off coming into that match so they were a little more fresh. We did get a win against Wilmington on the men's side with Adam Branks, number three. He played well, he's been playing well all season."

Hodges is an alumnus from UNC-Wilmington.

"I used to go to that school, so it was good to play those guys. It was good to see my former coach. I was the assistant coach there for three years and played there," said Hodges. "I recruited three of the players there and I know they didn't want to lose to me, so that added a little bit more motivation to UNC-Wilmington, but they played well. They came out of the gates strong. Several team members from both the men's team and women's team received all-conference accolades at the Big South Conference Award Banquet Apr. 16.

Zaluzhna was selected first team all-conference honors, as did Alan Ambrose.

"It's been a long time since a female tennis player at UNCA has been selected for that. She certainly deserved it," said Hodges. "She had a great season. Alan played number one singles for us all season, just did an excellent job all year for us and certainly deserved it," said Hodges. Acker-Estes was selected to represent UNCA on the All-Academic team. Both Alan Ambrose and Nick Neal were selected to represent UNCA for the men's All-Academic team.

Track and field performs well at Clemson

Two UNCA athletes qualify for NCAA Regionals after performance at BSC Championship

Jeremy Shrader
Sports Reporter

Peaking at the right time is key to collegiate track and field competition. The UNCA track and field team hopes their recent performance at the North Carolina-South Carolina All-Star meet in Clemson, SC reached that peak.

The meet included two first-place finishes and four second and third-place results. The team hopes this will be a sign of things to come in the NCAA Regionals meet May 30-31.

"I thought the team did very well at Clemson," said Head Coach Dean Duncan. "I think we're peaking at the right time." The Bulldogs had several outstanding performances in all three areas at the competition that featured Big South Conference foe Winthrop University and nearby rivals Appalachian State and Clemson University.

"The meet was small and we had an idea that the competition might not be as good, but actually it turned out to be a pretty good meet for us," said Duncan. "Their (Clemson) track is really fast and UNCA has quality athletes to compete against."

Although the meet was a total team effort, some individuals stood out more than others did. Fresh-

man LaTanya Harris stole the show as she took home first-lace in the 400-meter dash (57.56 seconds) and third-place in the 200-meter dash (25.66 seconds).

"The Clemson meet was the best meet of the year as far as the team's performance goes," said LaTanya Harris, a freshman from West Palm Beach, Fla. "Personally, the meet was a confidence booster."

Outside of the sprints, UNCA's track and field team had noteworthy performances in both distance and throws. Junior biology major Nathan Hedgpeith continued his good form as he took home two-

For both the athletes and the coaches, the Clemson meet served as an indication of the team's overall progress level in all areas this season.

"I feel that this is one of the most rounded meets that I have been on," said Nathan Hedgpeith. "We get better each year from new individuals that contribute to the team."

The talented contributions from each athlete were apparent at the Clemson meet as the individual results reflected an increased level of confidence of the team.

"It's the (results) just a good indication that they're mentally ready to do well this weekend," said Duncan. "It gives you a little confidence going into the end of the outdoor season."

"I think everyone is pretty confident going into the end of the season," said Harris. "We've been competing pretty well lately so we should be able to perform well, maybe even break some more records."

"We should have more (all-conference selections than in indoor) because we have more events," said Duncan. "We try to give each of our athletes a chance to succeed individually in what they specialize in."

While some athletes will be vying for all-conference honors, others will be aiming for the top as they compete for a birth in the NCAA

East Regional competition in May. "It's (Big South Outdoor Conference Championship) important because if you win your event you get a spot at regionals," said Duncan.

"The meet is going to be a higher quality meet than in the past. I think we have some athletes that can qualify for regionals."

Hedgpeith is just one of the athletes that has a chance at qualifying for regionals.

"Everyone competing will be pushing the others to their limits for that seed (birth at regional competition)," said Hedgpeith. "I am quite nervous for this reason and I hope I will do well enough to make regionals for the first time ever."

UNCA Women's
Basketball Camps

Nike Girls Basketball
Camp
Jun. 15-19

Betsy Blose Basket-
ball Camp
Jun. 30-Jul. 3

For more
information, contact
Coach Tammy
George at 251-6924
or email
tgeorge@unca.edu.

The UNCA track and field teams competed in the Big South Outdoor Conference Outdoor Championships Apr. 17-19. The women placed fifth out of eight teams, while the men finished seventh and last. Nathan Hedgpeith and Phil Litter were the first UNCA track and field athletes to qualify for the NCAA Regionals, held May 30-31.

Games you can go to

Baseball:
Apr. 25-27
series vs. Birming-
ham-Southern

Friday, 3 p.m.
Saturday, 3 p.m.
Sunday, 2 p.m.

Tuesday, Apr. 29
vs. Tennessee
7 p.m.
McCormick Field

Saturday, May 3
vs. East Tennessee
State
1 p.m.