

Seahawk Sports

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Seahawk men's baseball ready to take on national powers

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SENIOR STAFF WRITER

UNCW's baseball team (5-1) will face its toughest test of the young season as they travel to Greenville to play in the Keith LeClair Classic this weekend.

Not only will the Seahawks have to contend with host team East Carolina for the first of three match-ups this season but also ACC opponents Virginia Tech and North Carolina State, the latter currently ranked in the Top 20.

The Seahawks have momentum on their side going into the tournament following their 10-5 win over Wake Forest on Sunday. The win was the second in a row for the Seahawks after Wake handed them their first loss of the year, 9-7, Friday night. A game that saw seven Seahawks left on base in the last three innings, all in scoring position.

The Seahawks turned it around in a similar situation Saturday, as

sophomore Justin Barefoot blasted a two-run homer to break an 8-8 tie, as the team rebounded for a 10-8 win.

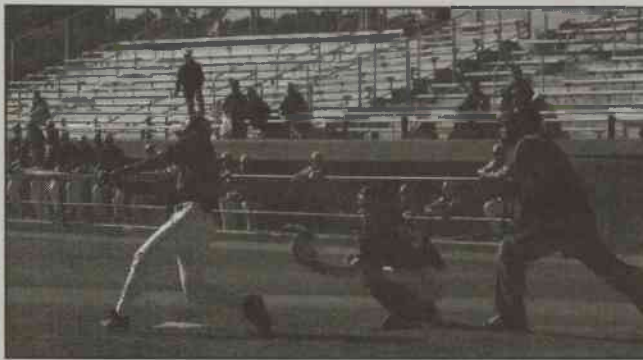
"We are glad we could rebound from that loss," said senior John Raynor. "We came out with big hits when we needed to hit and Adam (Paul) came in and shut them down. It was huge to win today."

Head coach Mark Scalf was glad for the win, but still saw room for improvement.

"We feel good about the win but not the way we played. Little things are huge in the big picture," said Scalf.

Sunday afternoon's series clincher was highlighted by a stellar performance from junior pitcher Zach Booker who posted a career-best nine strike-outs. Booker (2-0) added a career-long seven and two-thirds innings and was helped out with an eight-run fourth inning. Freshman Steve Halford hit his first home run, a grand slam, in the rally.

The competition will be tougher



Dan Hacker | THE SEAHAWK

UNCW sophomore outfielder Justin Barefoot makes contact in a game vs. Wake Forest. The Seahawks took the weekend series from the Deacs 2-1.

in the LeClair Tournament, but do not look for the Seahawks to roll over.

"(Offensively), this club can be as good as most any around. Pitching will still be pretty good. The staff has to get locked in on what their role is. When they get a feel for that, we are going to be much better," Scalf said.

The Seahawks will open the

tournament Friday against Virginia Tech (2-0), who is coming off season-opening wins over Campbell. The Seahawks will then face rival East Carolina (4-2), who beat UNCW 12-8 last time the two teams faced off in Greenville. The Seahawks round out the weekend with North Carolina State (8-1) who took two from the Seahawks last season.

Trask Coliseum: Usually the toughest place to play in the CAA

An editorial by:
BRANT WILKERSON NEW
SPORTS EDITOR

Everything about last Wednesday's game featuring the UNCW men's basketball team against Hofstra, 18-4 at the time, said must-win for the Seahawks. Well, everything except the crowd.

The crowd's participation was about average, for an above average match up of two teams with postseason aspirations. Half of the student section was filled with the loud Seahawk faithful, but the other half was indifferent students and the sitting general public.

Ironically enough, Georgia Tech happened to be visiting Chapel Hill, on ESPN at the same time. Unless half of the usual student crowd was at home studying, one could reason that those students were home watching 'their' Tar Heels.

Guess what? As a UNCW student, they're not 'your' Tar Heels. They're also not 'your' Blue Devils, Wolfpack, Deacons or Terps.

It's a hard idea to swallow because it's how most are raised around here, to follow one of the area ACC schools. Many of students' parents attended those schools, or they grew up in those towns. It's unrealistic to say just drop all allegiances to them, I'm still going to follow my team and watch every game—as long as it's not during a Seahawks game.

Those schools became successful in large part due to their fan bases, in a lot more ways than you'd think.

Fans provide the financial support through ticket sales, merchandise and donations. Those donations help to improve facilities, and recruiting budgets. Those recruits are swayed by facilities, and perhaps seeing those facilities on tele-

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Surf board industry wipeout causes flying board prices



Paige Gambill | THE SEAHAWK

Surfboards lined up for sale at local shop Pride could soon see their prices rocket. Surfers can expect to pay up to \$200 more for boards with the shutdown of Clark's Foam.

ADAM KNOX
CORRESPONDENT

Clark's Foam, the producer of 90 percent of blank surfboards worldwide, closed its doors without warning Dec. 5, citing environmental and workers' compensation issues.

Clark's closing has caused a panic and uproar in the surfboard industry. Many shapers worldwide have been left wondering where they would get the blank foam boards they needed to shape and stay in business. Retail prices of boards increased \$100 to \$200 a piece.

Mike Barden,

owner of Surf City surf shop in Wrightsville Beach, has been in the surfboard business for 15 years and said this was one of the "top five changes I've seen in the industry," citing other major changes in surfing like Kelly Slater's seventh world title and the invention of epoxy boards.

Barden said that despite the closing of Clark's foam, he "did not increase any of [his] in-stock prices. There is a glass ceiling on this. I don't want to let prices go too high," he said.

This industry upset has not affected the shop's sales though. "Sales have been the same," Barden said. "Wrightsville Beach is an educated market." He added that if anything, it "generated more interest."

The biggest effect Clark's closing has had is on custom boards and pricing on upper-end California shapers like Al Merrick's and Rusty's. It's going to take "more

time and more money for customs," Barden said. "Twice the time for custom boards, four to six months for a single custom."

Many in the surfing world fear that this will be the end of fiberglass boards, because Clark had such control over the industry. No company will be able to make up the production needs at the quality Clark produced.

Many fiberglass enthusiasts fear a switch to epoxy boards. "They just don't feel the same," said 18-year-old Matt Capone of Toms River, N.J. He has been surfing since age 6 and is a high-placing competitive surfer. "I won't ride epoxy, it's garbage Clark shut down. Prices went up at least \$100, but I won't ride anything but glass."

Barden isn't as worried, "It's not the death of surfboards," he said. "It will level out. Six months and we'll know more about it."