

Kiper: McNair Will Go High; Carolina, Houston Interested

MOBILE, Ala. — Despite modest numbers at the Senior Bowl, Steve McNair will likely be the first quarterback taken in the NFL draft.

McNair's 87 total yards in two quarters were minuscule compared with the 572 a game he had at Division I-AA Alcorn State this season.

But there was something more important than his 29 plays Saturday. It was the progress he made during the week of practice before the game, proving he could adjust from the shotgun he ran at Alcorn to the pro-style offense.

"I think I had good practices all week. The game didn't hurt me at all," said McNair, the NCAA career leader with 16,823 total yards. "One week ... they wanted to see me go in and do the things it takes to learn the offense, to take control. That's what I did."

"Hopefully, I moved up in the draft. I hope to go in the top five picks," he said.

According to at least one expert, McNair, who finished fourth in the Heisman Trophy voting, could get his wish.

ESPN draft analyst Mel Kiper said McNair is a "solid No. 1" in rating the top quarterbacks available for April draft. He lists Chad May of Kansas State and Kerry Collins of Penn State, the North quarterbacks at the Senior Bowl, second and third, respectively, ahead of BYU junior John Walsh.

"Collins, in a lot of NFL scouts' mind, is a finished product ... as good as he is going to get," Kiper said from the Senior Bowl. "McNair, with a little bit of seasoning, could be tremendous."

McNair played the second and fourth quarters for the South, completing 8-of-19 passes for 88 yards with one of six intercep-

tions thrown by the four quarterbacks. His only official carry was a one-yard loss after falling on a fumbled snap. The South won the game 14-7.

He sidestepped defensive pressure on several plays, and completed some crisp short passes.

He made a few mistakes, including throwing into double coverage and over-throwing a receiver, but was up to par with the other all-star quarterbacks.

"I thought Steve was very impressive. I thought he had an excellent week," said Indianapolis Colts coach Ted Marchibroda, who ran the South team. "I'd like to have his draft status."

Those who played with him Saturday and practiced with him during the week think McNair is ready for the pros.

"Handling the pro-style offense, I think he did a good job. I think he answered all the questions in the week of practice we had," said Auburn wide receiver Frank Sanders.

Said running back James Stewart of Tennessee: "I think he proved he could play on any level, and I think he's going to prove that on the next level. He just came and proved to everybody that he could play in the big time."

It's not a question of if McNair will play in the NFL. It's where.

McNair and his agent had dinner Friday with Bill Polian, general manager of the expansion Carolina Panthers, who have the first pick in the draft. The Houston Oilers, who have the third pick, have also expressed strong interest.

Kiper expects McNair to be Houston's pick. He forecasts Carolina taking junior defensive end Warren Sapp of Miami before Jacksonville picks Penn State junior running back Ki-Jana Carter second.

UNC's Morton Leads Defense in Senior Bowl

MOBILE, Ala. — Everyone came to see the quarterbacks in the Senior Bowl. Instead, they got a game only a defensive coordinator could love.

There were six interceptions, including one returned for a touchdown by North Carolina linebacker Mike Morton, not to mention three fumbles and four missed field goals as the South beat the North 14-7 on Saturday.

Despite the presence of Heisman-caliber quarterbacks Kerry Collins, Steve McNair and Jay Barker, the MVP award went to a defensive player, Florida State linebacker Derrick Brooks.

Morton returned an interception 47 yards for a South touchdown, and the North didn't score until the final play of the game to avoid the second shutout in the game's history.

"Definitely, a lot of the (turnovers) were the result of timing," said Collins, an All-American from Penn State who was third in the Heisman balloting. "You're not really on the same page with everyone else."

The South's first score was symbolic of the game. Late in the first quarter, Kansas State's Chad May overthrew Pitt's Curtis Martin in the flat. The ball sailed right into the hands of Morton, a 230-pound linebacker, who ran untouched the other way to give the South a 7-0 lead.

"It's a lot easier for the defense to get the timing down," Morton said. "We just have to fire off the ball, play hard and aggressive."

Collins and May each threw two inter-



Linebacker MIKE MORTON led UNC in tackles in 1994.



Mike Morton (58), shown here making a tackle Oct. 8 against Georgia Tech fullback Michael Smith, intercepted Kansas State's Chad May and returned it 47 yards for a South touchdown Saturday during the Senior Bowl in Mobile, Ala.

ceptions, and May was a dismal 5-of-18. Barker and McNair, the South's signal-callers, threw one interception apiece. The South also lost three fumbles.

Into the offensive void stepped the defenses.

Brooks, playing for the South, was named the game's top player with 13 tackles, including 10 unassisted stops. Arizona State's Craig Newsome had two interceptions for the North.

"There were great athletes on defense on both sides of the ball," Brooks said. "It was an insult, in my opinion," for people to predict it would be a high-scoring game.

McNair, fourth in the Heisman balloting despite playing for Division I-AA Alcorn State, threw several crisp passes and managed a couple of nifty scrambles but finished only 8-of-19 for 88 yards in his first game against I-A competition.

"The game didn't hurt me at all," McNair said. "I hope to go in the top five picks (in the NFL draft)."

Collins had the best day of the big-name quarterbacks, who helped draw a record Senior Bowl crowd of 40,007. Collins completed 21-of-43 passes for 226 yards, while Alabama's Barker, who finished fifth for the Heisman, was less flashy but more consistent: 6-of-11 for 61 yards.

"We killed ourselves with turnovers," Barker said. "We could have put a lot more points on the board."

A meaningless 2-yard touchdown run by Washington's Napoleon Kaufman on the final play of the game was the North's only score. The South offense managed only one touchdown, too, going 80 yards on seven plays in the third quarter without throwing a pass.

Alabama's Sherman Williams, who rushed for 94 yards in the game, carried four times for 44 yards on that possession

before Tennessee's James Stewart finished it off with a 23-yard TD run.

Collins guided the North to the end zone when the game already was decided. He completed 7-of-17 passes for 83 yards before Kaufman scored on a fourth-down run from the 2 as time expired to erase the North's zero from the scoreboard. The only Senior Bowl shutout came in 1990, when the North routed the South 41-0.

The teams combined for 793 yards — 447 by the North — but both squandered numerous scoring chances.

The South reached the North 13 on the first drive of the game before Williams fumbled the ball away. Clemson's Nelson Welch missed two field goals.

North Carolina tight end Greg DeLong and defensive end Oscar Sturgis also played in the game.

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THE Daily Crossword by Mary E. Brindamour

ACROSS

- 1 "Carmen"
- 6 Jannings, actor of old
- 10 Scorch
- 14 Perot, for one
- 15 Main vein
- 16 Mexican snack
- 17 Theatrical
- 18 Take a second job
- 20 Served ice cream
- 22 City in Florida
- 23 Radio device
- 24 Socked
- 25 Word on some posters
- 27 Kind of truck
- 28 Potent potable
- 29 Rara —
- 31 Treadle
- 35 Catalog
- 37 Napery
- 39 Voir — (court term)
- 40 Powerful beam
- 42 Nat —
- 43 Storage place
- 44 Old Nick
- 46 Penetrate
- 49 Rapid-fire speech
- 51 Half a Washington city
- 52 Breezier
- 53 Getting opinions

DOWN

- 1 Mil. inst.
- 2 Gerbil and hamster
- 3 Meticulosity
- 4 Meat and vegetable stew
- 5 Nobody in particular

33 Clapton or Heiden

34 Artist Magritte

36 Most irritable

38 Asian land

41 Badger's cousin

45 Three lines of verse

47 Most sick

48 Cure-all

49 Fit of resentment

50 Dutch island

51 The Earth

52 Ophidians

53 — Jacques Marquette

54 Asian gazelles

56 "Ball —"

58 Mil. craft

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