

HAAG APPROACHES END OF OUTSTANDING CAREER

BY LEE TAFT
STAFF WRITER

In a sport that gets little recognition, Kari Haag has made a big name for herself. Haag, a senior co-captain of the North Carolina women's swimming and diving team, will be competing in the U.S. Olympic Trials in Indianapolis March 6-12.

A spot on this year's Olympic team would be Haag's second appearance on a national team, the first coming as a member of the World University Games' record-setting 800-meter freestyle relay team in Fukuoka, Japan, in 1995.

"I was so thrilled to make a national team," she said. "I had never made any team, and that really helped."

"I kind of hope it will be easier, but I have a feeling it won't. I have a tendency to get a little stressed out and put quite a lot of pressure on myself. Sometimes it's bad and sometimes it's good. ... Whether I get fourth or first, if I go the time I want to, fine."

Haag will close out her illustrious collegiate career next month when she travels to the NCAA swimming championships in Ann Arbor, Mich. To this point, her highlights include:

- 1995 ACC swimmer of the year and ACC championship most valuable swimmer honors
- Eight individual ACC championship titles: 3 in the 50-yard freestyle, 2 in the 200 freestyle, and 3 in the 100 freestyle
- Twelve ACC relay titles
- 1993 and 1995 All-American honors
- NCAA runner-up in the 200 freestyle

Haag said her crowning moment of achievement in her career was finishing second in the nation in the 200 freestyle.

"It was very big for me because I had never even finished," she said. "I had conspired and had just never swam well. To be able to do that and not break down mentally and think, 'Look, I've been doing this all year long, I can do this,' that was fun."

Haag attributes her collegiate success to the way she was trained in high school. She said there is a trap many young swimmers fall into — burning out early and having nothing left when they get to college.

"I was lucky enough not to have that happen to me, and I really was fortunate to improve in the first year by leaps and

"Every sport is tough, but I really believe swimming is one of the toughest sports, mentally and physically combined, to get through."

KARI HAAG
UNC women's swimmer



KARI HAAG qualified for both the NCAA championships and Olympic swimming trials.

bounds," she said. "It's a really big psychological problem when people don't do well their first year and they think, 'Oh my God, what do I have to look forward to for the next three years?' For me, I thought, 'Oh my gosh, I have three years ahead of me where I can improve.'"

Haag's teammates and coaches said she offers a tremendous level of leadership and experience. Sophomore Tracey Barrett said Haag was one of the most focused athletes she had ever encountered.

Junior swimmer Cara Dunaway, who is also Haag's roommate, said Haag leads by her actions, not her words. "She doesn't necessarily always say, 'Get up and get going,'" Dunaway said. "But you can just watch her swim and train, and see she just has a winning attitude about her in everything she does."

Coach Frank Comfort said: "She is a tremendous leader by example, yet when she takes the time to speak, people listen, because they have enormous respect for what she's doing."

Haag's success has not been limited to the swimming pool. She has maintained an overall grade point average of over 3.0. However, she still claims one of her biggest struggles in college has been keeping up with her classes as well as her rigorous training schedule.

Despite the small amount of support the University community shows the swimming teams, Haag said she feels she still owes something to the students. She also said she hopes this year's success will bring out crowds in the future.

"I think this school has given me everything I could ever ask for," she said. "I'm on scholarship, I haven't had to pay for any of my school. That in itself is enough. They've given me something, I have to give them back something."

"Sometimes it's frustrating. ... As a team, in general, we get no crowd turnout. Every sport is tough, but I really believe swimming is one of the toughest sports, mentally and physically combined, to get through. It's nice to have people know what you're doing."

UNC to Face Surging Yellow Jackets in Conference Battle

BY BRIAN HAMILTON
STAFF WRITER

The best thing for the North Carolina women's basketball team right now would be an opponent the Tar Heels could easily defeat. The worst thing would be for that particular opponent to come into Carmichael Auditorium on a roll.

Such is the case for UNC tonight when Georgia Tech visits Chapel Hill in what is a key game for both teams. ACC competition runs hot right now, and no matter the record, every team is vulnerable.

"Everybody's beating everyone else right now," UNC coach Sylvia Hatchell said.

Well, at least with the exception of Sunday's non-conference showdown with No. 1 Georgia, a game which saw the Tar Heels nearly pull off the upset only to be denied as the Lady Bulldogs won 80-75.

Now UNC faces its second spoonful in the double-dose of Peach State rivals in the deceptive form of the Yellow Jackets. Georgia Tech sports only a 3-7 conference

record but is coming off a 59-30 demolition of Maryland in which Tech allowed the Tar Heels only eight second-half points. The Yellow Jackets offset their relatively poor shooting effort by forcing Maryland to a 3-for-21 shooting performance in the second half on Saturday.

"It's a big game, because Georgia Tech's playing really well right now," Hatchell said. "It was a great game when we won down there."

On Jan. 6, UNC pulled out a 78-74

victory which marked the second of six straight opening losses for Tech. Since then, Georgia Tech has won three of four in the conference, setting the stage for yet another close contest for the Tar Heels. Five of UNC's last six contests have been decided by five points or less.

UNC will focus its defense on the Yellow Jacket combo of sophomore forward Kisha Ford and freshman guard Carla Munnion. Ford leads Tech with 18.5 points per game. She had 18 points and seven rebounds in the first game against UNC. Munnion has stepped up as the team's second-leading scorer. She lit up Maryland for 24 points on 10-of-16 shooting.

The Tar Heels come into the game with the confidence that they can hang close to the country's best, but also with a couple of significant problems. Freshman guard Jes-

sica Gaspar is suffering from a sore back sustained in Sunday's game; her status was to be decided after practice Tuesday. Furthermore, UNC received only three points off the bench against Georgia, a figure Hatchell said needs to be improved.

Should the game be decided in crunch time again, Hatchell knows her team must square up to the challenge in order to avoid a sweep by Georgia rivals.

"Being a little more mentally tough down the stretch (is important)," Hatchell said.

Women's Basketball vs. Georgia Tech



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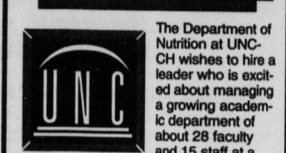
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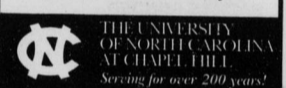
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