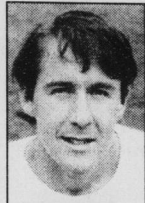


# Senior leaves bench to produce 4 goals

BY M. LEE TAFT

ASSISTANT SPORTS SATURDAY EDITOR

GREENSBORO — Before this weekend's MetLife Spartan Invitational, Alex Gros-Piron was seeing regular playing time off the bench with the men's soccer team but didn't feel like he was contributing enough.



UNC forward ALEX GROS-PIRON scored three goals this weekend on headers.

But at the tournament, Gros-Piron scored four goals in two games, including two goals on Friday night that pulled UNC to within one goal of Florida International.

Gros-Piron's arrival as a scoring threat has come from one thing — persistence.

"I've really kind of been waiting on that all year," he said. "I've been working on it, and it hasn't been working, but finally it came for me this weekend."

UNC coach Elmar Bolowich said that Gros-Piron's determination and work ethic are inspiring not only for himself, but for the team as well. The only thing he has been missing is the right mindset.

"The goals on Friday gave him a big boost in his confidence," he said. "He is working for his opportunities, he works hard up front, he doesn't give up, he goes through a brick wall, and that gives him the opportunities that he has created for himself."

The first three of Gros-Piron's goals came in the air, as he headed in two passes from Temoc Suarez and one from Carey Talley. While most players find head-shots difficult, Gros-Piron seems to thrive when he leaves the ground.

"I'm stronger in the air usually," he said. "But it was really because of the three good balls I got, and I had a lot of other opportunities I missed. I just got good feeds that I hadn't been getting in other games, and I finally put them away."

Gros-Piron came off the bench as usual in his two-goal outing against Florida International. He started the Hartwick contest but sat out part of the game. When he returned from the bench, he scored two goals within five minutes of each other.

Team captain Brian Mascia said Gros-Piron's ability to score as a substitute is the sign of a team that is on the rise.

"That's what we've needed all along," he said.

"That's what good teams have, good depth. It's nice to finally see him finishing some of those off."

## BASKETBALL

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When sophomores Jerry Stackhouse and Rasheed Wallace left for the pros in 1995, Smith was left with a team with limited experience — and few bodies. Smith started two freshmen — a rotation of Antawn Jamison, Vince Carter and Okulaja — in almost every game last season, and the new bodies simply couldn't catch on quick enough to put the man-moves on the floor.

And with limited players, there weren't enough Tar Heels to spell the youngsters, so zone 'D' became a mainstay.

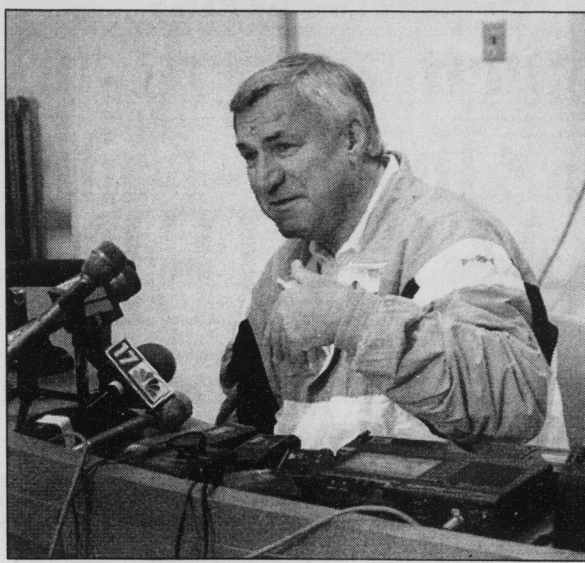
In fact, senior center Serge Zwikker is the only Tar Heel with old 'D' experience. "And he's probably forgotten it," Smith said.

But a year, Smith hopes, should make the difference. Jamison has added eight pounds to his lanky 6-foot-8, now-224 pound frame, Okulaja remains a bulldozer under the boards and Carter's looking to wipe away the defensive lack that benched him at times last season.

"Coach Smith has us doing a lot of things that I have not done since I've been here," Williams said. "Everyone's basically new at this. We're very happy with the strides that we're making, and hopefully we can continue making those strides and be a great team."

### Ndiaye decision still pending

Smith said Friday that he expected a decision this week about whether junior Mahkhar Ndiaye committed NCAA vio-



DITH/BRAD SMITH

North Carolina coach Dean Smith returns three starters to a team that finished 1995-96 with a 21-11 record and a second-round loss in the NCAA tourney.

lations when he accepted a plane ticket from adidas executive Sonny Vaccaro.

Ndiaye, a 6-9 center, told UNC officials several weeks ago that he accepted the ticket as a counselor at a summer camp, but Vaccaro later said that Ndiaye never served as a counselor.

Ndiaye has yet to play a game for the Tar Heels. He originally signed with Wake Forest out of Oak Hill Academy in Virginia, but the NCAA found violations in Wake's recruiting of Ndiaye. He then signed with Michigan, where he started as a sophomore. He wasn't happy

## ON THE ROAD

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the first game of the Classic on Friday.

Debbie Keller headed in the game's first goal during the seventh minute. Staci Wilson followed 12 minutes later by shooting the ball off the right post and into the net to give UNC a 2-0 advantage.

### Cross country places high in NCAA preview meet

North Carolina's women's cross-country team finished eighth at the Pre-NCAA Invitational in Tuscon, Ariz., on Saturday, while the UNC men's team placed 12th.

Senior Karen Godlock led the women's squad with a seventh-place finish. Sara Majka followed 28th, and Blake Phillips claimed 44th.

Bryan Calloway topped the Tar Heel runners by taking 35th in 27:45. Dave Moise nabbed 61st and Bill Jackson grabbed 67th for UNC.

Although their top runners were in

Arizona, the Tar Heels still fielded teams in the North Carolina Intercollegiate Meet in Charlotte on Saturday. The women's team finished sixth, while the men's squad finished fourth.

### Women's golf grabs 7th

The North Carolina women's golf team finished one stroke ahead of Alabama and Georgia to claim seventh at the Lady Paladin Invitational in Greenville, S.C.

The Tar Heels tallied a 925, 12 shots behind co-champs Wake Forest and Tennessee.

### Burnette wins tennis title

Tar Heel freshman Jeni Burnette defeated Minnesota's Jana Hrdinova 6-1, 6-4, to win the Flight C Singles Championship at the Wolfpack Tennis Classic this weekend in Raleigh.

Burnette was the top seed in the flight and won four matches en route to the title. She failed to drop a game in her first two matches and lost only one set in the tournament.

## SOCCER

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headed it past Doneit, putting UNC up 5-2.

Just four minutes later, Gros-Piron busted through a confused Hartwick defense and score his second goal, his fourth of the two-game tournament. The outburst was complete.

"It's impressive," team captain Brian Mascia said. "It's what we needed coming off a couple losses. It was really important to get a good result, and we were pretty happy with the game."

The physicality of the game further injured the Tar Heel lineup, with several starters playing limited roles. James Johnson reinjured his nose, which he broke in the 3-3 tie against Virginia. Anson Ashby was hit in the face and possibly broke his jaw.

On Friday, UNC suffered a defensive collapse in the 4-2 loss to Florida International. While held scoreless for the first 20 minutes of the half, the Golden Panthers scored on their first scoring oppor-

there, so he transferred to UNC and took a redshirt year last season in order to play for the Tar Heels.

"The poor guy didn't do anything wrong, and Wake Forest got in trouble with recruiting, and then he goes to Michigan and then chose to come here," Smith said.

It's unlikely, though, that Ndiaye will be punished by the NCAA because he once lived with Vaccaro prior to attending college. Under NCAA rules, players may accept gifts from people with whom they've had a former relationship.

Smith said Friday that before the investigation began, he was unaware that Ndiaye had lived with Vaccaro.

### Battle of the points

Williams has always been a point guard, a fact most people don't realize, he said, because of his unorthodox dribble.

In fact, last season marked the first year he'd played the off-guard position. Is he set to move back to his 'natural' spot?

"Coach wants me to play the point guard position as well as the shooting guard position," Williams said. "Me myself, I'm actually just willing to help the team in any way I can."

Freshman Ed Cota is Williams' No. 1 combatant for the starting spot. Cota, 6-1, 170 pounds, played at St. Thomas More Academy in Connecticut. Terrence Newby, a 6-2, 215-pound guard from Jordan-Matthew High School in Siler City, will also compete for the spot.

tunity, a free kick just outside the box. UNC traded the ball back and forth with FIU until the 41:31 mark, when Ignace Moleka put a rebound of UNC goalkeeper Dimitry Drouin into the back of the net.

The Golden Panthers scored again just 45 seconds later as a shot again rebounded off Drouin. This time, Tyrone Marshall was there for the score.

"After their first goal, we started to panic in the back and we exposed ourselves too early too quickly," Bolowich said. "Too many players made runs forward, and we had to play uneven in the back and it allowed them to counterattack, and they scored two goals right after their free kick."

UNC staged a comeback attempt behind Gros-Piron, who scored his first two goals of the year off headers from Talley and Suarez, cutting the FIU lead to one.

But the Panthers scored again within five minutes left by shutting down a Tar Heel breakaway and turning the momentum.

# Panthers stay perfect in West behind Kasay's 4 field goals

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

CHARLOTTE — When your No. 1 running back goes down with a season-ending knee injury, your rushing game usually goes with him. For the Carolina Panthers, it's been just the opposite.

Continuing his relief role for Tshimanga Biakabutuka, halfback Anthony Johnson had his third consecutive 100-yard rushing game Sunday to lead the Panthers to a 19-7 victory over New Orleans.

"He makes it easy to block for him," center Curtis Whitley said. "He works so hard and you know he's going to keep giving it everything he's got and keep hitting the hole hard and fast."

Carolina (5-2) stayed atop the NFC West by winning for the fourth time in as many games at Ericsson Stadium.

"It's a great thing to have 70,000 people rooting for you," Johnson said, "and it's a great thing to be able to give them something to root for. This team's really starting to come together."

John Kasay kicked four field goals to help the Panthers improve to 5-0 in the NFC West and remain the only team in the NFL with a perfect mark in division play. The Saints (2-6) built a 7-6 halftime lead but were held to 62 yards in the second half and lost for the first time in three games.

Saints coach Jim Mora launched into

a profanity-laced tirade at his postgame news conference before stomping away from the podium and kicking open the door on his way out of the interview room.

"We were terrible, absolutely terrible," Mora said. "It was an embarrassing, shameful coaching and playing performance by the New Orleans Saints."

New Orleans' Ray Zellers, coming off a career-high 174 rushing yards a week earlier, finished with 61 yards on 17 carries.

"It's going to be a real challenge for this team to respond," fumed Mora. "I don't know if they will or not, to be honest with you."

Johnson had 123 yards on 29 rushes Sunday against the league's worst rushing defense. He also caught five passes for 41 yards to help the Panthers defeat New Orleans for the third time in four meetings.

The Panthers took a 9-7 lead midway through the period on a 26-yard field goal by Kasay that capped a 13-play, 72-yard march. The drive appeared to have ended five plays earlier when Kerry Collins was sacked on third down, fumbled and New Orleans defensive end Fred Stokes recovered. But linebacker Mark Fields was called for holding before the fumble, giving the Panthers the ball and a new set of downs.

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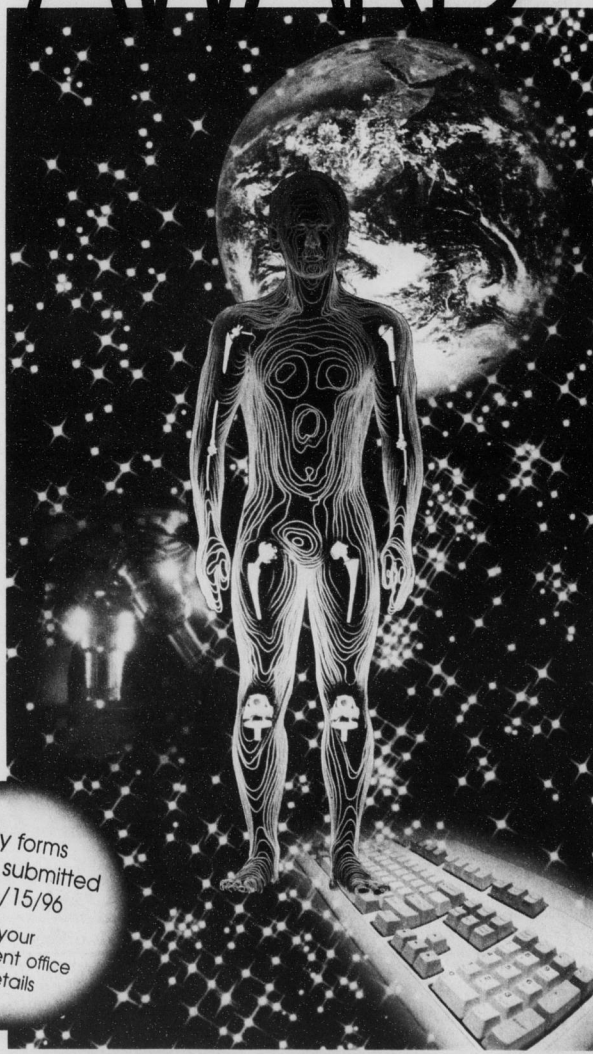
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