



SPORTS BRIEFS

Gonzalez named AL MVP

NEW YORK — Juan Gonzalez of the Texas Rangers beat Seattle's Al Rodriguez by three points Thursday, matching the second-closest victory margin ever in voting for the AL Most Valuable Player award.

Gonzalez, who hit .314 with 47 homers and 144 RBIs, got 11 first-place votes and 290 points.

Rodriguez, who hit a league-leading .358 with 36 homers and 123 RBIs, received 10 first-place votes and 287 points in balloting by the Baseball Writers Association of America.

It was the closest vote since 1960, when Roger Maris beat New York Yankees teammate Mickey Mantle 225-222. The closest AL MVP vote was in 1947, when Joe DiMaggio of the Yankees beat Ted Williams of the Boston Red Sox 202-201.

Albert Belle of the Cleveland Indians finished third with two first-place votes and 228 points, followed by Ken Griffey Jr. of the Mariners with four first-place votes and 188 points.

Back surgery could spell end of season for Haley

DALLAS — Charles Haley will have another back operation, and it's uncertain if the star defensive end for the Dallas Cowboys will play again this season.

Trainer Jim Maurer said Thursday the operation might be done this week, once scheduling problems with the surgeon are settled.

Haley, the only NFL player to play for five Super Bowl champions, has had surgery three times in the last four years.

Haley's back problem causes recurring numbness and weakens his leg muscles.

He missed five of the first 10 games this season.

When he was able to play, the team tried to limit him to about 30 plays a game.

"The symptoms have been there off and on since training camp," Maurer told The Dallas Morning News. "Charles had been feeling some pain, so he wanted to recheck it."

Maurer said Haley had a magnetic resonance imaging test in Dallas on Tuesday that showed little change from previous tests.

Parade honors Holyfield

ATLANTA — In no hurry to get back in the ring, Evander Holyfield was honored Thursday in a hometown parade, cheered by several thousand fans and praised by Atlanta's mayor as a "classy champion."

The parade, complete with marching bands, covered about five blocks along Peachtree Street, ending at Woodruff Park. Holyfield, his wife and Mayor Bill Campbell rode in a white convertible while a light lunchtime crowd — no more than two-deep — applauded their favorite son.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

BY KURT TONDORF
ASSISTANT SPORTS EDITOR

Last Sunday, the North Carolina field hockey team battled its way to victory in the ACC tournament.

Its reward? The NCAA selection committee has granted the Tar Heels the opportunity to repeat that feat all over again.

UNC is supposed to be hosting first- and second-round NCAA tournament action this weekend at Navy Field. But the three-team field of UNC, Virginia and Duke instead makes for a mini-ACC reunion. Though an encore performance will likely not disappoint fans of the sport who recognize the ACC as field hockey's power conference, the bill is not exactly drawing rave reviews from its participants.

"Virginia's a little upset with the draw, and we're a little upset," said UNC coach Karen Shelton, whose team will begin its title defense on Sunday against the Virginia/Duke winner. "I thought we might get the Duke/Princeton winner."

"But we don't necessarily want this to be easy. Anything worthwhile isn't going to be easy."

Based on the Tar Heels' 10-0 run

through the ACC regular season and year-ending tournament, yet another encounter with an ACC foe will not be difficult. UNC blanked the Cavaliers 4-0 and 1-0 in their two meetings and outscored the Blue Devils 13-4 in three victories this fall. The Tar Heels don't just think they can win this Sunday — they know they can.

But Virginia and Duke come to Chapel Hill hungry for redemption. For the Wahoos, their hunger results from a single embarrassing loss to the Tar Heels. For the Blue Devils, it's a matter of erasing a chain of them.

On Sept. 21, then-No. 1 Virginia traveled to Navy Field for a showdown between the country's two top teams. But the previous showdown might as well have been a hoedown for the then-No. 2 Tar Heels, who danced circles around the Cavaliers on their way to a 4-0 victory.

Duke, on the other hand, has grown accustomed to such rude treatment. The Blue Devils are currently mired in a 35-game losing streak to the Tar Heels that includes 25 shutouts and dates back to 1981.

Leading 2-0 over UNC in last Saturday's ACC semifinal, it appeared

that Duke, scissors in hand, would break the string.

But it was all for naught, as the Tar Heels scored three in the second half for a 3-2 victory.

But as always, Shelton says she has no preference of opponent, because there simply is no lesser evil. Both teams want a shot at dethroning the defending champions.

"It just doesn't matter who we play," Shelton said. "You look at the field, and there are 11 teams that have a legitimate shot at winning this thing."

Perhaps, but North Carolina in particular is going to be hardest to catch. No other team has the firepower to match UNC's explosive offense or a defense to stop them.

And thanks to a first-round bye, they'll watch Duke and Virginia slug it out on their own home turf before taking the field. All they have to do now is sit back and be gracious hosts.

"(The wait) drives me crazy," Shelton said. "Since there's no offsidess anymore and it's become a little bit more of a running game, we'll have somewhat of an advantage because we'll be rested."

"But it's going to be tough no matter who we play."



North Carolina forward Nancy Pelligreen (18) led the Tar Heels with 48 points in the regular season. UNC opens the NCAA tournament Sunday.

Tar Heels to open tourney with renewed rivalry in goal

BY PAUL STRELOW
ASSISTANT SPORTS EDITOR

Protecting the net behind the North Carolina women's soccer team doesn't appear too difficult. Face a few desperation shots while the Tar Heels' attack suffocates opponents.

But there has been an intense battle going on back in the crease. UNC goalkeepers Siri Mullinix and Gretchen Overgaard have fought all season for the starting slot for the NCAA tournament, which starts on Sunday when the top-seeded Tar Heels (20-1) face William & Mary (14-8) at 1 p.m. on Fetzer Field.

But since both have played well, they will continue to compete throughout the tourney.

"Our decision is still up in the air since we consider both to be excellent," UNC coach Anson Dorrance said. "But right now they're playing for the right to play in the final four."

The first round in their renewed competition begins against William & Mary this weekend. The Tar Heels clobbered the Tribe 6-0 earlier this season, allowing only one shot en route to victory. But William & Mary fared well against UNC early, limiting North Carolina's offensive abilities with an aggressive defense.

The Tar Heels' veteran front line has pushed UNC to 12 straight wins. Senior

Debbie Keller has played a major role in North Carolina's recent success by opening space along the wings with crafty interior play. Her 42 points and 12 assists lead the team.

Keller recently moved into second place in UNC's record books with 53 career assists.

William & Mary will have to put points on the scoreboard in order to have a chance against UNC. But even if the Tribe's frontrunners make it past the Tar Heels' backfield, they will meet one of two barriers in their quest to score.

Both Mullinix and Overgaard have denied opponents with regularity this year. Mullinix has allowed 0.44 goals a game; Overgaard 0.52.

Yet each has added a different dimension to the UNC squad, although both face limited opportunities to showcase their talents. Mullinix is quick off the goal line and adept at stopping the breakaway, while Overgaard uses her 6-foot frame to deflect crosses and high shots.

But in the competition for the starting



UNC goalie SIRI MULLINIX has posted a 0.44 goals allowed average.

position, Mullinix may hold an advantage.

The sophomore has played well of late, and she has doubled Overgaard in the saves category. Mullinix also knows the feeling of losing the competition. She fell short in her quest to unseat then-senior Tracy Noonan a year ago, and she said she wouldn't add any pressure to herself if Overgaard performs well.

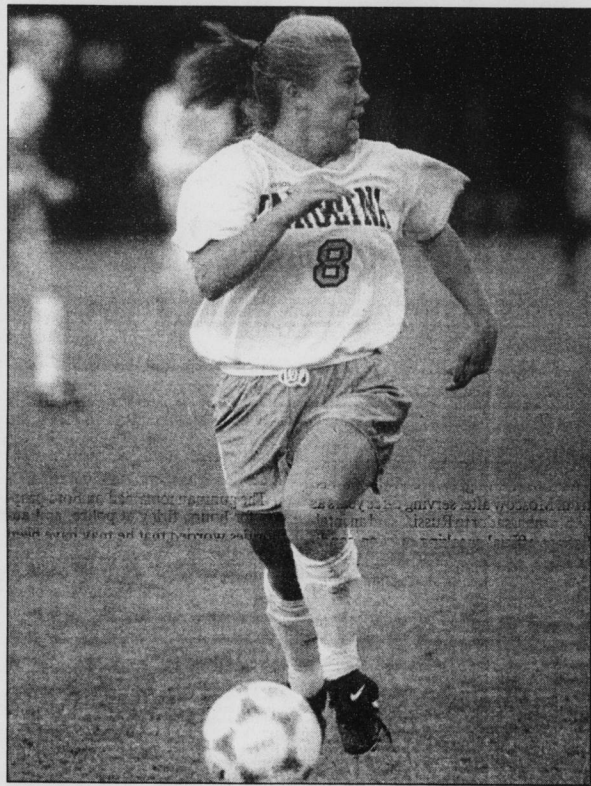
"I just want to play within my own ability," Mullinix said. "I've got to go with what Anson thinks is best for the team."

Dorrance has split Mullinix and Overgaard's playing time throughout the year, saying that whoever performed the best would receive the starting nod in the postseason. One plays the first half, the other subs in for the second.

The move won't create any problems that the Tar Heels didn't face this year. While the two goalkeepers excelled statistically, they found that keeping a mental edge provided the toughest challenge.

"Sometimes you can't get into a rhythm or stay focused after sitting (in the first half)," Mullinix said. "But (rotating) has the advantage that it gets you into every game."

Tickets for Sunday's contest are \$4 for students with college identification, \$6 for the general public and \$4 for senior citizens and children 12-and-under.



Tar Heel forward Debbie Keller leads UNC with 42 points and 12 assists. North Carolina opens the NCAA tournament Sunday against William & Mary.

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Field Hockey - NCAA Second Round
UNC vs. Duke/Virginia winner
2:00pm at Navy Field
Admission: \$3 Adults, \$2 Students

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