

New Attitude Keys UNC's Return to Winning Form

The North Carolina men's soccer squad has jumped out to a 6-2 overall record and a 1-1 mark in the ACC.

BY ROLAND HOFFMAN
Staff Writer

Not too long ago, the thrill of victory buzzed through the North Carolina men's soccer program. Then the agony of defeat set in. Now the thrill is back in Chapel Hill.

After years of consistently being one of the stronger teams in the ACC and qualifying for the NCAA tournament the 1995 Tar Heels experienced a change. The team finished that year 0-5-1 in the ACC and in last place.

The drought continued through 1996

and then climaxed with a 1997 season that ended with UNC finishing last in the league (6-13 overall, 1-5 ACC).

Junior defender Michael Bucy had one adjective to describe the Tar Heels during his freshman season.

"We were terrible," he said. "UNC coach Elmar Bolowich said the 1997 season was dismal because of a variety of reasons.

"Three years ago we lost a whole bunch of seniors; two of them were All-Americans," he said. "We needed to start getting more talented players in. What happened was we did not have any depth."

After three years of suffering in the ACC gutter the Tar Heels are finally back on the right track.

Last season, with a team comprised mainly of freshmen and sophomores, UNC finished 11-6-2 overall and 3-3 in

the ACC. The team finished tied for fourth in the league and barely missed receiving an NCAA tournament berth.

That momentum has carried into this season, as the Tar Heels have a record of 6-2 overall and 1-1 in the ACC. UNC is currently ranked 20th by Soccer America.

Along with an improved record, some players say they can see an improved attitude.

"I can see a difference in the caliber of people on the team, as people and as players," Bucy said. "It's a lot more fun to play, not just when you're winning, but to play with the guys on the team. It is a testament to the recruiting and also the camaraderie we have on the team."

The team attitude in the locker room makes Bolowich's job better as well.

"We don't have the individuals we had in the past to make the program

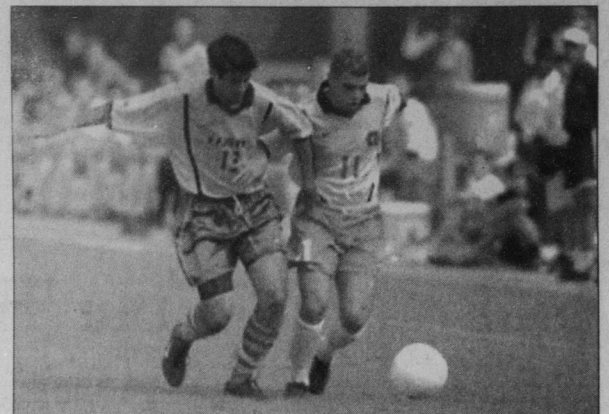
good or be in the top 20," he said. "We have to do it more with the team spirit and with a team effort. That's fun for me to work with a group like that."

The players who led last season's surprising run are a year older, and they are joined by a strong freshman class. This combination has led to a bench full of talented athletes.

"We have an enormous amount of depth," Bolowich said. "We can sub through five or six guys deep and not miss a beat on the field. I think that's the biggest difference."

Bolowich sees this recent success producing good things. "It's really good to have that bunch together right now," he said. "I think with the core that we have we will form a very, very strong team."

The Sports Editor can be reached at sports@unc.edu.



DTH/GREG WOLF

Forward Chris Carrieri (11) leads the Tar Heels with six goals this season.

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