



BRIAN MURPHY
 PLAYER TO BE NAMED LATER

Woods Set To Emerge As Legend

Last year was a year of reflection. In the sports world, that means lists. Lists of the greatest games and athletes. Lists of the best and the worst. Even lists about who will be on the next lists.

With less than two weeks gone in the new year, century and millennium, Tiger Woods is looking like a good bet to make the next round of lists.

Woods, who capped 1999 with The Associated Press Male Athlete of the Year Award after winning eight PGA tournaments, including his second major and the final four events of the year, is at it again.

He began this season just like he ended the previous one - with a victory. Woods topped Ernie Els on the second playoff hole at the Mercedes Championships for his fifth consecutive tour victory - the third longest streak ever.

Only Ben Hogan's six consecutive victories and Byron Nelson's unbelievable 11 in a row are greater. But while Hogan set his mark in 1953 and Nelson achieved his run in 1946, Woods has started his streak against the deepest fields of PGA Tour talent in history.

And Woods has done it with the sport's spotlight right in his eyes. No golfer attracts the gallery he does, and with the retirement of Michael Jordan, no athlete draws the same amount of attention.

Yet Woods has handled it in stride. He has brought many to the game who never had thought about attending a tournament or even picking up a club. His commercials, with the help of Nike, have amazed and inspired.

And like a certain Nike spokesman, he has shown the ability to finish off opponents. His latest victory marked the 14th consecutive tournament that Woods has won after at least sharing the lead after three rounds.

Woods, with his cross-cultural appeal, has replaced Jordan as the most dominant athlete around - not only on the course, but in public as well.

But unlike Jordan, a basketball player whose athletic life span lasted about 20 years, Woods can play his sport for the next 40.

At age 24, he hasn't even reached the age when most golfers become their most productive. He should still be paying his dues, learning the game, trying to get his Tour card. Instead Woods is redefining the game.

After Sunday's playoff loss, Els, one of the sport's stars, seemed pleased with merely reaching the playoff.

"At least I pushed him to extra time," Els said.

Woods has already climbed to No. 3 on the all-time money list, as much a testament to the growing popularity and money in golf as to Woods' greatness.

Woods has forever been chasing legends. As a youngster he made a list of Jack Nicklaus' career achievements, studied them and calculated how to top them. And he's on his way.

While the Golden Bear's 18 victories in majors is a long way away, nothing appears out of Woods' reach.

If he continues to pile up victories, there will be no debate as to who is the decade's greatest athlete, regardless of what Vince Carter, Tim Duncan, Randy Moss, Alex Rodriguez or any other superstar youngster does.

The only debate will be where Woods ranks on the all-time list - ahead of Nicklaus?

Or ahead of Jordan?

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North Carolina Drops 3rd Straight Game

BY BRET STRELOW
 Assistant Sports Editor

With North Carolina point guard Nikki Teasley gone on an indefinite leave of absence, Monday's contest between the Tar Heels and Clemson left room for a new floor general to emerge.

Tiger playmaker Krystal Scott filled that void.

Scott scored all 16 of her points in the second half to catapult Clemson to a 60-59 victory at Carmichael Auditorium, the Tigers' first win in Chapel Hill since 1990.

The Tigers (10-5, 1-2 in the ACC) held a two-point lead at intermission, but Scott scored nine points in the first 7:40 of the second half to push Clemson ahead 40-28.

"(Clemson) coach (Jim) Davis had said the way to break down a zone was to get in the zone and take good shots," Scott said. "I knew the best shots for me to take were the foul line shots."

Scott's penetration enabled Clemson's offense to operate with extreme efficiency in the opening minutes of the second half. The Tigers scored on eight of their first 10 possessions to build that 12-point advantage.

North Carolina forwards LaQuanda

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Teasley Takes Leave From Tar Heels

North Carolina women's basketball coach Sylvia Hatchell announced Sunday that junior guard Nikki Teasley would take an indefinite leave of absence from the team.

"This is not a disciplinary action," Hatchell said. "We're just trying to do what's best for Nikki and the team. At this point, there is no set timetable for her return."

Teasley will remain on scholarship and is enrolled in classes at the University this semester, Hatchell said. Teasley appeared in UNC's first 12

contests and started in eight games. She did not make the trip to Charlottesville, Va., for Thursday night's game against Virginia, an 87-68 loss.

She is averaging 14.0 points per game and leads the Tar Heels with 69 assists and 29 steals.

"We appreciate the interest people have in our program, but we request that Nikki's privacy be respected," Hatchell said. "We will not address any specifics of the situation."

From Staff Reports

Barksdale and Jackie Higgins combined to score UNC's next 11 points before four Tar Heel free throws cut the deficit to four points with 6:41 to play.

But that four-point deficit would be as close as North Carolina (9-5, 1-3) would get until Juana Brown's desperation 3-pointer at the buzzer.

Five times in the final 6:15 UNC closed to within four points. Each of the first four instances, the Tigers responded by scoring on their next possession.

"It's not anything but players making plays," Davis said.

In the final minute, Clemson gave

UNC a chance to make some plays of its own, but the Tar Heels failed to capitalize.

With 22 seconds left, Scott missed two free throws. Higgins rebounded the final miss, but falling out of bounds, she threw the ball back to Clemson.

Scott missed two more tries, but the Tar Heels could not corral the second miss and the Tigers maintained possession.

"If we could have gotten some of those rebounds down there on those missed foul shots, I thought we were going to pull it out," UNC coach Sylvia Hatchell said.

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North Carolina junior Jasmyn Huntington is surrounded by two Clemson defenders during UNC's 60-59 loss Monday at Carmichael Auditorium.

Cota Scores Big in UNC Win

BY T. NOLAN HAYES
 Sports Editor

The knock on Ed Cota is that he can't score.

The truth about Ed Cota is that he can score. If N.C. State's players didn't know it before, they do now.

Cota, North Carolina's all-time assist leader, connected on all eight of his field goal attempts en route to a career-high 23 points as the Tar Heels defeated the Wolfpack 83-75 Saturday night.

"Ed did score a lot, but he wants to win, and if the shot's there, he's going to take it," UNC coach Bill Guthridge said. "Certainly we got some good screens for him, and he was able to penetrate in there. I thought Ed was sensational."

Cota, who is known for his leadership and passing ability, directed a UNC offense against the Wolfpack that operated with frightening precision. The Tar Heels (11-4, 2-0 in the ACC) shot a blistering 71.1 percent from the field and converted 26 of 32 free throws.

Perhaps most encouraging for UNC, a team that struggled with its halfcourt offense in losses to Indiana and Louisville, was its balance. Freshman guard Joseph Forte chipped in 18 points, and center Brendan Haywood added 16 on 7-of-7 shooting.

The outburst came against an N.C. State defense that ranked first in the ACC in scoring (57.1 points per game) and field goal percentage (37.8 percent).

"Going into the game, we were very aware of North Carolina's offensive proficiency, and certainly tonight they were near perfect," N.C. State coach Herb Sendek said. "We really didn't have any answers for their offense tonight."

The Wolfpack (10-2, 1-1) countered UNC's accuracy with a workmanlike throw-it-up-and-get-it approach on the offensive end. N.C. State attempted 68 shots in the game - compared to UNC's 38 - and grabbed 16 offensive rebounds.

The strategy worked early on, as the Wolfpack went on a 7-0 run to take a 34-26 lead with 2:19 to go in the first half. But the Tar Heels responded with a 10-0 spurt of their own, highlighted by a 3-pointer from Forte and two buckets by Haywood, to end the half.

"We were down eight points, and it was time to score some points and play some defense out there," Cota said. "I think the guys really stepped up, and we just took it from there."

The Tar Heels came out gunning in the second half, scoring on 10 of their first 12 possessions to grab a 58-43 lead with 13:25 to play.

Haywood scored on a turnaround jumper and a dunk in that span, and he also rejected a shot by high-flying forward Kenny Inge. Haywood finished the game with three blocks and seven rebounds.

Haywood has been more of a pres-

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North Carolina senior Ed Cota maneuvers around N.C. State guard Archie Miller during UNC's 83-75 victory Saturday night. Cota hit all eight of his field goal attempts and finished with a career-high 23 points.

Peppers Brings Punch to Front Line

BY BRIAN MURPHY
 Senior Writer

Few people would describe Julius Peppers as an average Joe.

At 6-foot-6 and 280 pounds, Peppers casts an intimidating shadow wherever he goes. On the football field, that shadow looms over offensive tackles and quarterbacks.

After earning Freshman All-America honors from The Sporting News for his 50-tackle, six-sack season, Peppers and his broad shoulders have moved to the hardwood. And he's making his presence felt there as well.

"He had a great spirit about him, great enthusiasm. And you know what? He's not just another guy. A lot of times it's just another Joe. Uh-uh," Clemson coach Larry Shyatt said after Peppers had six points and 13 rebounds in the Tar Heels' 65-45 victory.

"Very good tools," Shyatt added. "Very good basketball intellect."

Peppers came to the team as a mere curiosity. Thought of by many as just another big body and late-game substitute, he has developed into one of the Tar Heels' most important players. A foot injury to Brian Bersticker opened the door for playing time and Peppers,

as a man his size is apt to do, kicked the door down.

Peppers' emergence allowed coach Bill Guthridge to move Jason Capel back to his natural small forward position and created a three-man rotation at power forward and center with Peppers and former AAU teammates Kris Lang and Brendan Haywood.

"I didn't expect very much from Julius when he came out," Guthridge said after the Clemson game. "I had seen him in high school and knew he was a good prospect. Ed Cota kept

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Tar Heels Nab Rival's Old Coach

Less than a month after being fired by the Wolfpack, Mike O'Cain signed on as UNC's offensive coordinator.

BY T. NOLAN HAYES
 Sports Editor

For seven years as N.C. State's head football coach, Mike O'Cain tried his best to lead his team to victory against in-state and ACC rival North Carolina.

Seven times he failed, perhaps most notably this season when the Wolfpack lost 10-6 in Charlotte on Nov. 11 to a North Carolina team that entered the game 1-8.

But O'Cain won't have to worry about trying to beat the Tar Heels in 2000. Available because he was fired by N.C. State on Nov. 24, O'Cain joined the football staff at UNC on Dec. 21 as the team's offensive coordinator and quarterbacks coach.

Now, it is O'Cain's objective to keep alive UNC's seven-game winning streak against the Wolfpack, a streak that hung over him during his days at N.C. State like a dark cloud. Funny how life works, huh?

"It's not weird at all," O'Cain said at a press conference in the Kenan Football Center. "It feels pretty good, to be honest with you. After three weeks without a job, it feels good to have a job. I'm excited."

Robbie Caldwell, an assistant at N.C. State since 1986, joined O'Cain as a new addition to the UNC offensive staff. He was named offensive line coach Dec. 22. Caldwell held the same post for the Wolfpack in addition to his duties as an assistant head coach under O'Cain.

UNC coach Carl Torbush fired offensive coordinator and offensive line coach Steve Marshall, quarterbacks coach Jim Hoffer and running backs coach Ken Mack on Dec. 6 after the Tar Heels finished 1999 ranked last in the ACC in total offense (276.6 yards per game).

Torbush, who has known O'Cain since 1976, said he was pleased that he was able to add one of the ACC's most respected offensive minds to his coaching staff.

"Hopefully, and I really believe, it

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Offensive coordinator Mike O'Cain takes over an offense that ranked last in the ACC by averaging 276.6 yards a game.