

# UNC Discovers Identity, Hands 'Pack 1st Home Loss

By **BRIAN MURPHY**  
Senior Writer

RALEIGH – North Carolina spent much of the beginning of the season trying to figure out exactly who it was.

The Tar Heels experimented with defenses. They toyed with varying rotation patterns. They struggled.

After the team's 70-62 victory against N.C. State, the Tar Heels seem to be finding their identity.

Drum roll, please. Introducing Ed Cota's team.

Men's Basketball	
UNC	.....70
N.C. State	.....62

Cota, a four-year starter at point guard and the school's all-time leader in assists, has often been content to set other teammates up, making his offense look passive.

After taking a career-high 23 shots in last week's loss to No. 3 Duke, Cota has asserted himself as an offensive weapon. On Wednesday, Cota obliged on both accounts.

He delivered the ball to teammates with his trademark precision. Many of his 11 assists – which moved Cota past NBA star Gary Payton into 7th on the all-time NCAA list – came after he sicced by 'Pack point guard Justin Gainey and drew double-teams from State's big men.

"Ed's penetration is the key," said center Brendan Haywood, who scored a game-high 19 points, most on passes from Cota. "When he penetrates, he creates for everybody, and tonight he was on his game."

But when State trimmed what had been an 11-point Tar Heel lead to five, Cota knocked the Wolfpack out with a 3-pointer. With less than a minute left in

the game and the shot clock running down, Cota, who played 39 minutes and had one turnover, calmly swished the 3, ending any hope of a 'Pack comeback.

"It felt good before I shot it because that is one of my favorite shots – off the dribble," he said.

The win improved Cota's record to 4-0 against State in Raleigh, but it was first in the team's new Entertainment and Sports Arena. The Wolfpack (15-6, 5-5 in the ACC) entered the contest 14-0 in its new home and fed off an emotional crowd to take a 14-4 lead in the first half.

But the Tar Heels, now 6-4 and tied with Maryland for second in the ACC, remained poised and continued their game plan of pounding the ball inside.

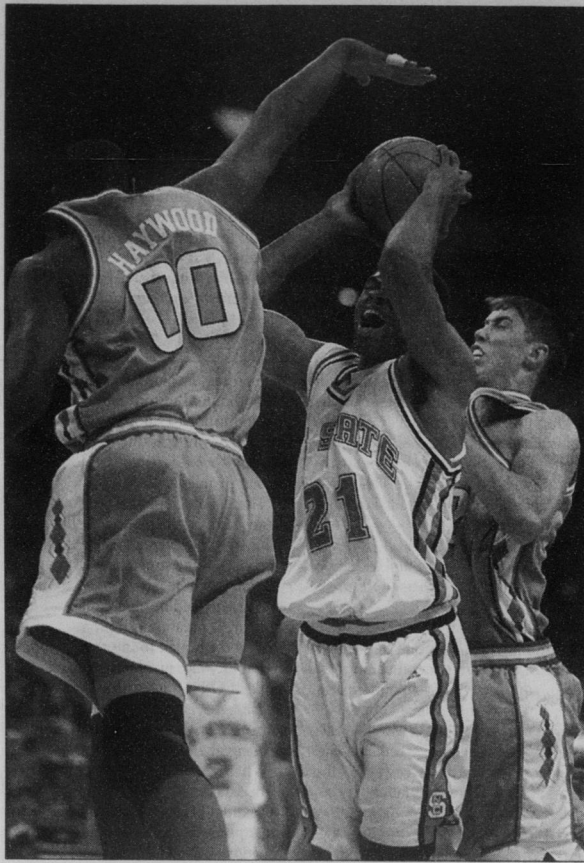
When State forward Damon Thornton (18 points) picked up his second foul at 10:04 of the first half, the 'Pack led 18-10. While Thornton sat the rest of the half, UNC's big men took over. Haywood scored eight points – six on dunks off Cota feeds. The surge gave the Tar Heels a 28-26 halftime edge.

"There was no panic, but a sense of urgency," Haywood said. "We really felt we have to get it right now, make this run, or else we're going to look up and this (deficit) is going to be 15 or 20."

After State's Anthony Grundy, who was scoreless in the first half, drilled two 3-pointers to start the second stanza, UNC turned to its outside game. Joseph Forte's 3 gave the Tar Heels a 36-34 lead, one it would never relinquish.

Then Max Owens (eight points in 11 minutes) canned 3-pointers on consecutive possessions, giving UNC breathing room until Cota finished off the Wolfpack.

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UNC's Brendan Haywood contests N.C. State forward Kenny Inge's shot during the Tar Heels' 70-62 win at the Entertainment and Sports Arena.

## Haywood Helps Tar Heels Win Battle Under Bucket

By **EVAN MARKFIELD**  
Senior Writer

RALEIGH – Although the final numbers might have indicated it was business as usual for Brendan Haywood in North Carolina's 70-62 win Wednesday night, the big man had an easier time than he has had in past games this season.

Sure, Haywood shot 9-of-12 from the field, which is right on target with his season field-goal percentage of .722. Sure, many of his buckets were the old standby, the two-handed monster jam.

But Haywood avoided double- and triple-teams with which other teams have harassed him, and UNC's guards lofted the ball into the post with precision, making it a smooth road to a game-high 19 points for the Tar Heels' center.

"My teammates were giving me the ball – that's where a lot of the credit goes," Haywood said. "With (N.C. State forward) Ron Kelley being out, that didn't help them at all. Damon (Thornton) got in early foul trouble, and we were just able to attack inside."

The 'Pack planned to front Haywood and double-team him, but the 4-inch height advantage he had over Thornton made it all the easier for UNC point guard Ed Cota to get the ball down low.

"We wanted to front him and defend the pass, but Cota got it over the top to him," Thornton said. "Once he's got it

like that, there's not much you can do about it."

And when the double-team came, Haywood took a few pointers out of Cota's playbook, dishing the ball off at the last second underneath to provide his teammates with easy dunks.

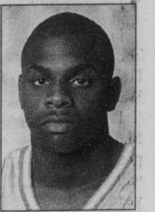
The result was a huge margin in points in the paint, with the Tar Heels outscoring the Wolfpack 40-18 underneath.

"They're so big, and a lot them can see over our defenders and make quick passes," Thornton said.

Besides getting easy baskets down low, UNC's big men dominated the glass to make sure State got limited scoring chances. UNC outrebounded the Wolfpack 46-31, holding N.C. State to nine offensive boards and eight second-chance points.

Haywood led the team with 10 rebounds, while Jason Capel and Kris Lang chipped in eight and six, respectively. Even the guards, Cota and Joseph Forte, snagged five boards apiece.

"(Rebounding is) always a point of emphasis," Cota said. "Early in the season we've been outrebounded, especially offensively. But now everybody's really looking to box out."



North Carolina center **Brendan Haywood** had a double-double with game-high totals of 19 points and 10 rebounds.

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### UNC 70, N.C. State 62

UNC		N.C. State	
pts	reb	pts	reb
70	42	62	36

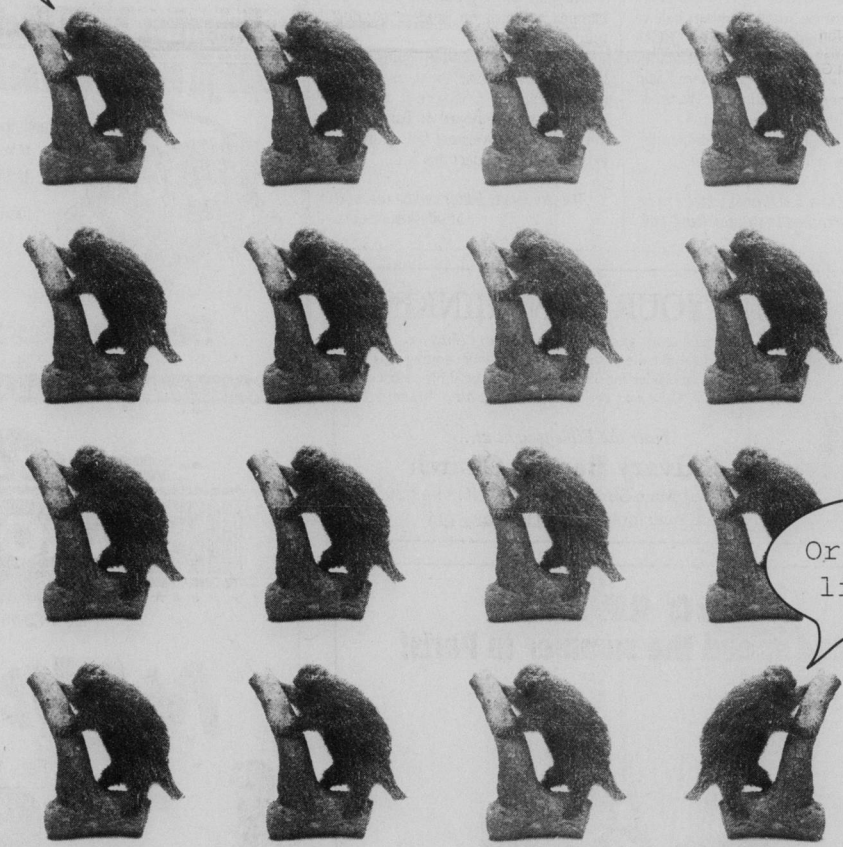
UNC (70)											
	min	fg	ft	rb	a	pf	tp				
Lang	30	4-6	0-0	2-6	0	2	8				
Capel	35	3-9	1-2	3-8	2	2	8				
Haywood	35	9-12	1-3	3-10	4	3	19				
Forte	35	4-13	0-7	2-6	1	1	16				
Cota	39	2-9	1-4	0-5	11	1	6				
Brooker	1	0-1	1-2	0-0	0	1	1				
Holmes	1	0-0	0-0	0-1	0	0	0				
Owens	11	3-5	0-0	1-1	0	1	8				
Melendez	1	0-0	0-0	2-3	0	0	0				
Ewert	1	0-0	0-0	0-0	0	1	0				
Johnson	1	0-1	0-0	0-0	0	0	0				
Peppers	10	2-2	0-1	1-3	0	3	4				
<b>Total</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>27-88</b>	<b>10-19</b>	<b>14-42</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>70</b>				

N.C. State (62)											
	min	fg	ft	rb	a	pf	tp				
Inge	35	3-9	2-2	2-7	0	2	9				
Wilkins	32	1-7	0-0	1-5	2	0	2				
Thornton	26	8-12	1-3	2-4	1	4	18				
Grundy	33	4-13	0-1	2-7	5	2	11				
Gainey	35	6-10	1-2	0-1	6	3	15				
Miller	18	2-6	0-0	0-2	2	2	4				
Wells	7	0-1	2-2	0-0	0	1	2				
Crawford	3	0-0	0-0	0-1	0	0	0				
C. Williams	9	0-2	1-2	2-3	0	2	1				
<b>Total</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>24-60</b>	<b>7-12</b>	<b>9-30</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>62</b>				

Percentages – FG .466, FT .526 3-point goals – 6-16 .375 (Owens 2-4, Forte 2-5, Cota 1-2, Capel 1-3, Brooker 0-1, Johnson 0-1). Team rebounds – 4. Blocked shots – 1 (Haywood). Turnovers – 14 (Lang 4, Capel 2, Forte 2, Haywood 2, Melendez 2, Cota, Owens). Steals – 5 (Capel, Cota, Forte, Lang, Owens).

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