

UNC Eyes Season of Adjustment

BY TED KEITH
Staff Writer

If the North Carolina men's golf team looks a little rusty at the season-opening Puerto Rico Classic on Feb. 27, it's because Mommy wouldn't let them play in the snow.

"Mother Nature wasn't kind to us," second-year coach John Inman said.

January's record-breaking snowfall canceled a week of practice the Tar Heels needed to get back in top form.

Inman also lost a chance to settle on his five-man rotation for the spring season.

Seniors Max Harris and Paul Daniel and junior Rob Simmons appear to be the only certainties. Harris, an All-ACC performer likely to hold down the top spot in the lineup, is the leader.

Daniel and Simmons have separated themselves with their fall and preseason consistency and will be counted on to maintain that performance throughout the season.

"If one is playing poorly, the other is there to pick him up," Inman said. "It's not like other sports where you can call a timeout and talk to them. They have to

pick each other up, and those two have."

Inman said four to six players will compete for the final two spots in UNC's lineup.

Senior Brad Hyler is one of the front runners.

Hyler helped the Tar Heels grab a tie for second place at last year's

ACC Championships by finishing tied for 18th individually.

Freshman Ramon Bescansa is also set to emerge after posting UNC's fourth-best score at the Golf World/Palmetto Dunes Collegiate in Hilton Head, S.C., in early November.

"We're looking for him to play well, but we're also looking for our other freshmen to get in there and make their impact," Inman said.

As if searching for a lineup wasn't enough to keep Inman bogged down,



UNC senior Paul Daniel finished in a tie for seventh at the ACC Championships last season.

the Tar Heels are still trying to get used to their upgraded home facilities.

The new Finley Golf Course, designed by world-renowned golf architect Tom Fazio, is more challenging than its predecessor. The Tar Heels don't seem to mind very much.

"It's amazing. It's so convenient being two minutes from campus," Harris said. "The course is tough and very hard, and it's going to challenge us to play well."



UNC men's golf coach John Inman

Men's Golf

Feb. 27-29 Puerto Rico Classic
Rio Mar Country Club in San Juan, Puerto Rico

March 9-12 Golf Digest Collegiate Invitational
Desert Inn Country Club in Las Vegas, Nev.

March 25-26 The Schenkel E-Z-Go Invitational
Forest Heights Country Club in Statesboro, Ga.

April 14-15 Bell South Intercollegiate
MacGregor Downs Country Club in Cary

April 21-23 ACC Championship
Old North State Club at Badin Lake

Harris Maximizes Chance To Swing in United States

BY BRET STRELOW
Assistant Sports Editor

Former North Carolina golf coach Devon Brouse had a lot of faith in renowned golf instructor David Leadbetter.

Brouse, without ever watching Worthing, England, native Max Harris strike a golf ball, went on the word of Leadbetter and asked Harris to swing his clubs for the Tar Heels.

"I knew David Leadbetter down in Florida, and I asked him where to go," Harris said. "He knew Coach Brouse, and he just said go to North Carolina."

"That was it, that was my decision. I never saw the campus, Coach Brouse never saw me. He never saw me swing."

Those days of uncertainty are ancient history.

Harris cracked UNC's lineup for all five of the Tar Heels' tournaments in the fall of 1996 and hasn't looked back since.

Now a senior, he has developed into one of the top college golfers in the country. He finished sixth in last year's NCAA Championships and has earned All-ACC honors each of the last two years.

This fall, Harris won The Ridges Intercollegiate on Sept. 12 - his second individual championship. He also finished tied for 20th place at the Savane College All-America Golf Classic, which features the nation's best collegiate golfers.

UNC coach John Inman said Harris' experiences during the fall tournaments have made him a better player.

"He keeps his composure better than he used to, and he's just a really solid player," Inman said. "He's getting better every tournament."

That's a scary thing considering Harris has been one of UNC's top-four finishers

in 101 of the 117 rounds he's played for the Tar Heels.

He can now begin to daydream about taking his skills to the professional ranks.

Teammate Paul Daniel, for one, would like to see Harris stay in the United States.

"I have this talk with him every day," Daniel said.

"As one of his friends, I'd love to see him stay over here so we could be able to stay in touch more. There's a lot more money over here."

If the PGA Tour interests Harris at all, he need look no further than his coach for help and advice.

Inman, whom Harris called a "calming influence" on the golf course, played on the Tour for 12 years and won two professional tournaments.

"I know a lot of the courses, I know a lot of the manufacturers, just the little pitfalls that are out there to try to stay away from," Inman said.

"Everybody has to make their own way, but I can give him a lot of knowledge that I gained over the years out there if that's the way he wants to go."

Harris said he might take his game back to Europe. But after all, he did leave England in the first place to attend a school he knew nothing about.

"Never heard of it," Harris said. "After I had done some research, I heard that Michael Jordan had been here, and I was like, 'Yeah.'"

Now, the college golf world knows all about North Carolina's Max Harris.



Tar Heel senior Max Harris won The Ridges Intercollegiate this fall with a three-round total of 5-under par.

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