

UNC's Mack Dials in for Win

By JAMES GIZA Staff Writer

Summer Mack took her place in lane five at the edge of the pool Saturday before the start of the 200-yard backstroke...

When the announcer read her name, however, the junior raised her arms over her head, and a beaming smile suddenly radiated from her face.

After the last competitor's name was read and the swimmers got into position, a hush fell over Koury Natatorium. The electronic beep sounded, and the eight women pushed off into the water.

After 25 yards, Mack and Virginia's Megan Iffland were dead even for first. "It was my last event, and I just gave it everything I had," Mack said.

But what was going through her mind as she stroked through the water? Maybe she was thinking about the swimmer in the adjacent lane, Iffland, whose prelim time that morning was more than a second faster than Mack's.

Perhaps it was her third-place finish Friday in the 100-yard butterfly - an event she entered with the fastest qualifying time - that tickled her brain.

Or was it something else? Mack swam a career-best in the 100-yard backstroke Friday. Her time of 54.55 broke the ACC record held by former Tar Heel star and Olympian Sue Walsh by

more than a second. But her freshman teammate...

Christy Watkins swam a 53.92. Mack made due with silver. "I know that she and Summer had both worked really hard," Walsh said.

"And I know it's hard for Summer as well because she's the older of the two, but she swam a great race herself."

Was it this tough loss that Mack thought about as she and Iffland touched the wall tied at the halfway point? Not even close. All she could think about was the race.

"After the first 100, I knew it was going to be a close race," Mack said.

The 200-yard backstroke is hardly Mack's strongest event. Because she was more successful throughout the season in the 100-yard backstroke and butterfly, winning the 200 never really seemed too plausible a notion for Mack.

But as Iffland touched the wall only a half second ahead of her with 50 yards remaining, Mack's chances suddenly didn't look so remote.

"Before the 200 back I was a lot less



Tar Heel swimmer Summer Mack outlasted Virginia's Megan Iffland to capture the 200-yard backstroke Saturday.

nervous because it's an event that isn't my strongest event or hasn't been in the past," Mack said.

But Saturday night was different. She was swimming the ACC Championships in Chapel Hill for the last time. She could show everyone how she intended to use disappointment and frustration.

"It made me want to come back and prove myself in a way and just do the best that I could," Mack said.

She caught Iffland as the two headed into the final turn. Her arms churning in forceful precision, Mack slowly pulled off as the edge of the pool approached.

Mack touched the wall. Her time, 1:58.22, was a personal best. She beat Iffland by almost a second and a half.

"I didn't expect to win it, but the fact that I won it and I made my best time makes it twice as good," Mack said.

At the post-race medal ceremony, Mack strode to the podium with that same radiant smile on her face. She shook hands with Iffland, then gave her teammate and third-place finisher Laura Collier a quick hug.

Watkins walked across the bulkhead in the middle of the pool, sipping from a water bottle. But the spotlight was not on her this time.

The moment finally belonged to Mack.

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seven-team field.

"I think we surprised a lot of people - surprised our team, surprised our parents, surprised (UVA.) a whole lot," said Stefanie Rulis, who was part of UNC's victorious 200-meter freestyle and 400-meter medley relays. "It set the tone for the whole meet, and we just went from there."

Indeed, they did. Friday night's competition saw the Tar Heels widen the gap between themselves and UVA, despite winning only two of seven events.

The Cavaliers attempted to make an early run at the Tar Heels, winning the 200-yard medley relay, the 400-yard IM and the 100-yard butterfly.

UNC's depth, though, was not only enough to overcome UVA's impressive

performances, but also enabled it to increase its lead by 55 points during that span.

In fact, the Cavaliers won four of Friday's seven events but were unable to cut the lead that would virtually assure the Tar Heels of victory by the end of the night's session.

Despite its large lead, UNC was wary of a Saturday-night UVA. comeback, understanding that it would need good qualifying times in Saturday's morning session to secure the championships.



UNC swimming and diving coach Frank Comfort collected his 13th ACC women's title Saturday.

"It's easy to lose a big lead fast, so everyone came in this morning, and I think that was the hardest session," co-captain Kelly McLaughlin said. "People came in and knew that they had to get the job done this morning so we would have the chance to win tonight. After that, there was really no way to lose."

Co-captain Jen Strasburger, who along with fellow seniors Ilana Kavaddo and McLaughlin swam in her last ACC Championships and her last home meet, said: "Our theme today was 'taking care of business', and we took care of it this morning. We had some great swims, and a lot of people put themselves into position for NCAAs."

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UNC Gymnasts Win on Day of Firsts

By ROLAND HOFFMAN Staff Writer

The North Carolina gymnastics team's meet Friday was an event of firsts.

In its first home meet of the season, UNC tumbled past James Madison 194.575-191.725.

Tar Heel senior Meredith McDermott topped a score of 38 for the first time in her college career, finishing in third place all-around with a score of 38.150.

Along with McDermott's first, Brooke Wilson completed a skill that had never

before been done in Carmichael Auditorium. During her floor routine, she landed a full-in, which consists of two back flips along with a full twist.

"That's the first time that has been performed here at Carmichael by any gymnast, not just a Carolina gymnast," UNC coach Derek Galvin said. "It was exciting for the entire team to see Brooke do that."

The previously unseen skill pushed Wilson to a score of 9.95 in the floor exercise, with one judge giving her a perfect 10. The 9.9 from the second judge drew a round of boos from the enthusiastic home crowd.

Wilson also placed second in the balance beam and the vault on her way to

capturing the all-around title with a score of 38.9. Her score would have been higher had she not fallen on the bars while attempting a second new maneuver.

"I was throwing two new skills tonight, and I hit one of the two," Wilson said. "I just have to move forward and hit two out of two, and I'll be ready to go."

The Tar Heels (2-3) got contributions from a number of gymnasts, especially the more experienced team members.

Senior Julie Pasqualini placed first in the bars with a score of 9.85 and sophomore Monica Middleton took first in vault and balance beam.

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