

Baseball Grabs No. 4 Ranking After Sweeping UCLA

By Will Kimmey Assistant Sports Editor

North Carolina wanted to use its three-game series against then-No. 2 UCLA this past weekend as a barometer of its status in the college baseball world.

"I try not to really set expectations in terms of wins and losses," UNC coach Mike Fox said. "I just wanted to go out and compete and see where we stood."

After sweeping the series, the Tar Heels (9-0) now stand fourth in the nation according to Collegiate Baseball's latest poll. Baseball America has UNC ranked 13th.

While Fox says the polls don't matter to him, he said he was pleased with the way his team has played thus far. Six of North Carolina's nine wins have come against ranked opponents.

"If somebody had told me we'd be 9-0 with the teams we were playing, I would have bet the farm we wouldn't," Fox said.

It looked like all bets were off for the Tar Heels on Friday, however. UNC trailed the Bruins 13-4 heading into the top of the ninth but rallied for 13 in that frame and won 17-13.

"Always going in you think positively, but being down 13-4 going into the ninth, you kind of doubt yourself," said

third baseman Sean Farrell, who went 5-for-11 with two homers and nine RBI in the series. "I can't believe we did that."

"It was a great team win."

The Tar Heels benefited from a similar offensive



UNC pitcher Eric Henderson

outburst Sunday. Down 6-0 in the fourth, UNC hung an 11 spot on the board and went on to a 12-11 win.

"It builds confidence like you wouldn't believe," UNC pitcher Eric Henderson said of the team's rallies. "You can sit there on the mound and can afford to challenge hitters. It does worlds for my confidence."

Not that Henderson really needed the confidence boost. The junior transfer

from Santa Fe Community College was the only North Carolina starter to make it out of the fourth inning all weekend. The lefty held UCLA to three runs on four hits in six innings of work in Saturday's 6-4 victory. He struck out nine Bruins to raise his team-leading total to 21.

The Tar Heels next take the field Wednesday at 3 p.m. when they welcome East Carolina to Boshamer

Stadium. But after its emotional sweep of UCLA, will UNC suffer a letdown against the No. 20 Pirates?

"Absolutely not," Henderson said. "It's ECU, and we're pumped. When they come, they bring their 'A' game, and we're going to bring ours."

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

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