

# Tar Heels Strive to Maintain Positive Attitude Despite Skid

UNC's baseball team lost to Towson on Tuesday but recovered to win three out of the next four contests.

By JOE DISNEY  
Staff Writer

The North Carolina baseball team learned a first-hand lesson about how attitude, an intangible quality, can affect a season.

And the Tar Heels hope that the acquired knowledge of the past week can carry them from Chapel Hill to the College World Series in Omaha, Neb., in May.

The week started with many around the team wondering how UNC, which began the season 21-0, would respond to being swept by Georgia Tech in Atlanta last weekend.

The answer was not encouraging. The Tar Heels lost to Towson 9-8 on Tuesday, ending their 52-game home win streak against nonconference foes.

Suddenly, a season of amazing possibility was beginning to turn sour.

"I think all of us were kind of in shock coming back from Tech although they are very good," UNC coach Mike Fox said. "You have enough confidence in your team that you are not going to get swept on the road. It happened, and we didn't respond real well, and I take full responsibility for that."

"We came out against Towson, and I don't think we were ready to play."

While Tar Heel fans stood for the seventh inning stretch of Friday's matchup against N.C. State, they had to be wondering what was happening.

The Tar Heels trailed 14-2, and the ship that was supposed to carry UNC into the postseason was sinking before the voyage could start.

Then things turned around.

Although the Tar Heels couldn't muster enough runs to win, they crossed the plate nine times in the final three innings to give the team a spark that carried into the weekend.

"We didn't play that bad on Friday," shortstop Clay Hooper said. "We had a late start. The team got together and told ourselves we need to have intensi-

ty all nine innings, not just six or seven innings."

Taking that advice to heart, the Tar Heels finished the weekend by playing two complete games, taking them 5-2 and 4-1.

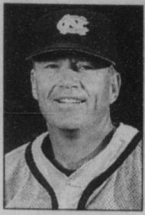
The lesson learned should stick for the rest of the year.

"We could have taken the approach of, 'Are we really good?' and second-guessed ourselves," freshman center fielder Adam Greenberg said.

"Maybe we did a little, and that might have showed why we lost to Towson and lost the first game Friday. But we've got a veteran club, and our coaching staff stuck with us, and we came together."

As senior Derrick DePriest explained, part of the problem was that the Tar Heels were pushing too much. While the seniors had experience, the pressure of being undefeated might have made them press too hard in Atlanta. Following suit, the freshmen fed off that leadership and pressed a little.

"Now that we have gotten our feet wet a little bit, and if we play our game, we should be OK," DePriest said.



North Carolina coach Mike Fox said he took full responsibility for his team not being ready to play Towson.

"We realized we're a good solid team, and we've just got to go out and play and have fun," Greenberg said. "And that's what we didn't do for four or five games; we just forgot how to have fun."

Not just the players learned a new understanding of the ups and downs of baseball in the ACC. So did Fox, the teacher.

"The thing you can't do is start kicking yourself and start changing things and start going crazy," Fox said. "You are going to get beat in this league. I'm saying that because I'm learning how to accept that. The teams in this league are very good."

Despite the tough losses and the lessons learned last weekend, UNC must stay focused toward the future, which starts today at Boshamer Stadium against Coastal Carolina at 3 p.m.

The Tar Heels expressed a concerted effort to be ready for mid-week games against nonconference foes. These games are key to maintaining the right attitude heading into weekend play.

And the Tar Heels' attitude seems to have them pointed in the right direction.

"We've lost some games that we've been disappointed with," Hooper said. "But I think if you asked any one of our guys how our attitude would be with only five losses to this point in the season, I think we would all be pretty pleased with that."

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

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