

Ueltschey Anchors Tight Defense

The UNC men's soccer team is reaping the benefits of goalie Michael Ueltschey's off-season work ethic.

By JOE DISNEY
Staff Writer

With a fleet of explosive scorers up front for North Carolina, sometimes goalkeeper Michael Ueltschey goes unnoticed standing alone at the other end of the field.

It must be noted, however, that if it wasn't for his abilities, those scorers would have a lot more to worry about.

Ueltschey, a junior from Jackson, Miss., is the leader of a defense that allows the UNC offense to relentlessly attack while knowing it is protected if things go wrong.

In all, Ueltschey has made 12 saves on a Tar Heel defense that has allowed only five goals in seven games.

"One of the things that a goalkeeper has to add to his team is confidence," goalkeeper trainer Scott Calabrese said.

"They need to know when he's called into action he can come through for them. The players have that confidence now."

Ueltschey can understand the importance of having confidence in a goalkeeper because there was a time when he roamed the field as a forward for Jackson Academy.

As the eventual Mississippi state tournament MVP, Ueltschey started at forward in the final against Washington Lee High School.

But once the championship came down to a shootout, Ueltschey assumed his position in the net.

After missing the first save attempt, Ueltschey was hearing the heckles of the rival crowd about how he "sucked" and that he was only going to UNC.

Later in the shootout, Ueltschey would have his revenge.

He scored the fifth and final kick before assuming his place in goal with the championship on the line.

Ueltschey made a diving stop to his right to win the match and the Mississippi state championship for his school.

While pure talent got Ueltschey to UNC, it was his sophomore year in 1999 and the summer of 2000 that has made him a complete player in goal for

North Carolina.

Ueltschey won the starting job for the Tar Heels during the 1999 season in competition with then-junior Brad Thomas.

Much of Ueltschey's development came through game experience in the ACC season.

He capped the year off with a shutout of Clemson in the first round of the ACC tournament.

Instead of going home for the summer, Ueltschey stayed around Chapel Hill and worked extensively on his weaknesses with Calabrese.

"We picked out some aspects of his game that were challenging, and he's turned his focus to them," Calabrese said.

Ueltschey's teammates notice and appreciate his dedication.

"The best thing about him is that he

is determined to get better and that he works on his game," senior Michael Bucy said.

Ueltschey improved the technical side of his game to complement his steady mental approach, which might be a greater asset to the Tar Heels, especially in the position he holds.

"He's got an even keel," Bucy said. "His mind is always in the game. He is prepared at all times to make saves to win games."

Playing for the Tar Heels, Ueltschey doesn't get many chances to showcase his talent as UNC has outshot opponents 139-59.

"(Ueltschey's) got an even keel. His mind is always in the game. He is prepared at all times to make saves to win games."

MICHAEL BUCY
UNC Senior Midfielder

One of Ueltschey's main responsibilities comes with organizing one of the best defenses in the ACC with David Stokes, Danny Jackson and Chris Leitch.

"This year, I think we've had a little more trouble than in the past scoring goals, and what's been getting us through this is our defense," Ueltschey said.

"Sometimes, when they do get through, hopefully I can be there to make the save."

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Junior goalkeeper Michael Ueltschey, shown here in a preseason match against Virginia Tech, has helped UNC record three shutouts this season.



UNC goalkeeper Michael Ueltschey has made 12 saves in the Tar Heels' first seven matches.



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