

Bucz Volunteers Services Beyond UNC Soccer Field

Midfielder Michael Bucz ranks third on the men's soccer team in points with five goals and seven assists.

BY IAN GORDON
STAFF WRITER

It seems Michael Bucz has been reliving his high school days for the last several years.

The North Carolina soccer player has brought the Dance Marathon – a service project that he and his buddies at Sanderson High in Raleigh invented – to the University.

Bucz has continued the excellence in the classroom for which he was granted a Morehead Scholarship; Bucz has been named an Academic All-American twice.

Oddly enough, even his collegiate soccer career has started to resemble that from his high school days when

he played at Sanderson with current teammate Caleb Norkus.

"We came into our high school career and our coach, in 20 years, had lost like 20 games – 12 of them were our freshman year," Bucz said. "Gradually we got better, and by our senior year won the state championship."

UNC, likewise, was 6-13 in Bucz's first year, the worst season in school history. In 1998, the Tar Heels were 11-6-2, and last year the squad recorded 12 victories en route to its first NCAA tournament appearance since 1994.

This season, Bucz's team is 13-2 – tied for the best start in school history – and No. 3 in the country.

There's the gradual improvement.

Now, all Bucz needs is a championship.

The senior midfielder has been a key to the Tar Heels' success this season, netting five goals and tallying seven assists, good for third on the team.

But Bucz's exploits stray far from the soccer field, just as they did when he was in high school.

"I think what he does is prioritize very well. He makes sure he gets things accomplished and gets accomplished well."

ELMAR BOLOWICH
UNC men's soccer coach

"He got great grades, was real active in student council and was real social," Norkus said. "Not much has changed."

And that's a good thing for the North Carolina Children's Hospital in

Chapel Hill. More than \$110,000 has been donated to the hospital by the Dance Marathon in the two years that it has been held at UNC, according to the event's Web site.

Bucz's involvement with the Dance



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Tar Heel midfielder Michael Bucz has 18 goals and 22 assists for his career.



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Bucz, a co-founder of the UNC Dance Marathon, has seen the Tar Heels go from 6-13 his freshman year to 13-2 and a No. 3 ranking this year. Bucz spends much of his free time volunteering at the North Carolina Children's Hospital.

Marathon started with volunteer work at the Children's Hospital.

"When you go to the Children's Hospital, you see the opportunity you have to make a difference, because you see the pain that they are having," Bucz said. "Not so much in the children, but in the parents."

"And you want to do something to relieve that pain, you want to lend out a hand and say, 'Hey, I'm going to help you out a little bit.'"

Bucz continues to reach out that helping hand despite his difficult workload. He credits his friends – who are active in organizing campus activities ranging from the White Ribbon Campaign to UNC club squash – for keeping him relaxed and excited about the organizations in which he's involved.

"I think what he does is he prioritizes very well," Tar Heel coach Elmar Bolowich said. "He makes sure that things get accomplished and get accomplished well. I don't think he's going to do something that he's not fully committed to."

Regardless of how UNC ends the season, Bucz will be remembered as much for what he brought to the university community as for what he did on Fetzer Field.

"They'll say, 'Hey, that was the guy who was the great soccer player and who ran the school at the same time,'" Norkus said.

Just like he did back in the day.

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