

Lending A Helping Hand

Athletes Coming Together assists freshmen on UNC sports teams with academic and athletic concerns.

By RACHEL CARTER

ASSISTANT SPORTS EDITOR

Holly Huff looks back through her years of college to remember what it was like when she was a freshman on the North Carolina field hockey team.

She remembers being the girl from St. Louis who didn't know a whole lot of people and struggled in her first semester to balance the demands of one of the best field hockey programs in the nation with her school work.

"I remember this time my freshman semester looking at all of my classes and being really worried about my grades because I hadn't experienced athletics at this intensity before, and I wasn't putting what I needed to in my classes," Huff says.

But luckily for Huff, there was someone there to help her — Katie

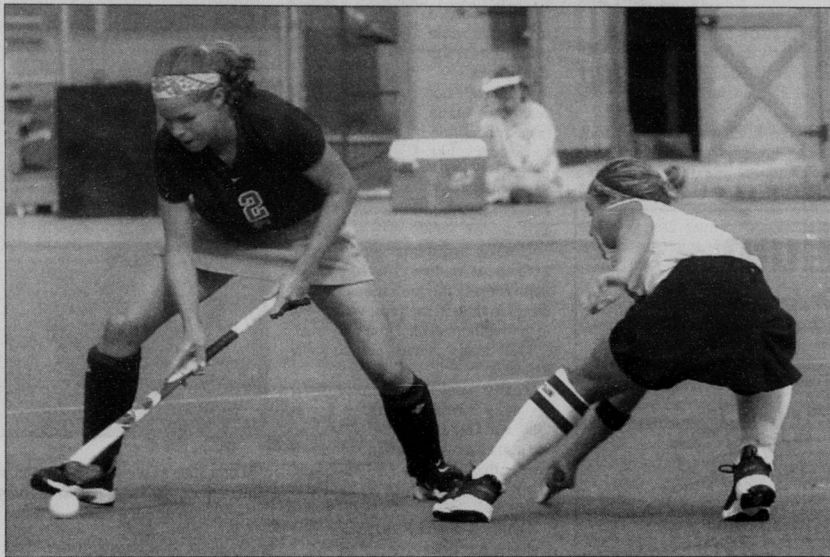
Lewis, a women's lacrosse player and Huff's

Athletes Coming Together, or ACT, mentor.

"My mentor actually took me to the library, and we actually sat down and did homework one night," Huff says.

"I realized how much time she spent, and it inspired me to spend more (time studying)."

Lewis's aid must have made quite an impact on Huff, who will graduate in December with honors in English and was inducted to Phi Beta Kappa



DTH/RYAN VASAN

Senior forward Holly Huff, left, has been a member of Athletes Coming Together (ACT) since her freshman year. She now oversees ACT and has instituted changes which makes the relationship between mentors and freshman more personal.

in this spring.

Now, though Huff is not a mentor, she oversees the ACT program with co-coordinator Brad Byers, a junior wrestler.

ACT links nearly 90 upper-classmen mentors with the entire freshman class of athletes — including all the walk-ons.

Those mentors are overseen by the six-member executive committee,

which is composed of Rob D'Urso (men's lacrosse), Dauntae Finger (football), Maggie G o l o b o y (women's basketball), Allison Lentz (track and field), Merridith Meade (women's lacrosse) and Jessica Wilson (women's lacrosse).

"The reason I got involved was because I had awesome mentors who took care of me."

BRAD BYERS

ACT co-coordinator

The members of the executive committee devise programs for the four meetings ACT has during the semester.

Tuesday, ACT will meet and discuss topics the mentors and executive committee think freshmen will be struggling with at this point of the semester — how to deal with injury, their roles on the team and how to register for classes.

Huff says the groups of mentors have fun things planned, like skits, to make the meetings more entertaining.

In fact, making ACT more interesting was what got Huff inspired to get more involved. She says during her freshman year, the meetings were mostly someone "preaching" about various school policies like alcohol and academics.

But Huff and Byers have been working hard to change that.

Byers says ACT has worked to take the focus off of the big group meetings and onto fostering friendships between freshmen and mentors.

"We really got to an individual one-on-one mentor program, which we haven't had in the past," Byers says.

Although Byers says the individual nature of the mentor program hasn't always been this strong, it was his relationship with his mentor that made him become one.

pressures of football.

"She came in, made me feel good, and I had someone to talk to when I needed somebody," Finger says.

Finger's teammate, Anthony Perkins, says his mentors helped him figure out basic questions he had.

"They pretty much told me everything I needed to know," Perkins says. "Any question I had, they pretty much had an answer for or could guide me to someone who could give me an answer."

Huff says Perkins is one of the most enthusiastic mentors that ACT has. She says he always shows up for meetings early and offers to help however he can.

Perkins says they wanted to help freshmen not make some of the mistakes they made their freshman years.

"I like it for the simple fact that I like helping other people," Perkins says. "There were a lot of things that I didn't know as a freshman, and I think it's real important for incoming freshmen to know because things are always changing at the University."

"I think it's important that we help them keep up with things academically and athletically, so they'll be able to stay on top of things."

For Perkins, being an ACT mentor is a good chance to help get freshman athletes on the right track for their collegiate careers.

Says Perkins, "I enjoy trying to help freshmen out and try to point them in the proper direction."



Dauntae Finger



Brad Byers



DTH/MILLER PEARSALL

Defensive tackle Anthony Perkins (58) is one of the most enthusiastic mentors in ACT. The senior says his mentors helped him with the questions he had.

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