Pinchbeck Overcomes Adversity Men's Tennis Defeats

North Carolina tennis player Kate Pinchbeck has battled Graves' disease since the fall of her freshman year.

By AKILAH NELSON

Any given afternoon at Cone-Kenfield Tennis Center, Kate Pinchbeck's singles

match will grab your attention.
Pinchbeck, who has played No. 2 and
No. 3 seed singles for North Carolina this season, will usually be in the midst of a third set or a tie-breaker.

You'll notice her talking to herself in her Australian accent, urging herself to play better, smarter and harder. You'll hear her teammates chant, "Rudy! Rudy!" from the sidelines, likening her to the main character of her favorite movie.

Most often you'll hear someone in the stands yell, "So tough, Kate. You're so tough.

That's what most people say about the sophomore from Edmonston Park,

"Kate has always had a reputation of being mentally tough," North Carolina women's tennis coach Roland Thornqvist said. "She's a team player, and she possesses all those qualities other than being a good striker of the ball, and that's one of the reasons we're so happy to have her on our team."

Thornqvist recruited Pinchbeck while she was playing at Mount Carmel

Catholic in Varroville, Australia.
Pinchbeck, who is ranked No. 75 in the Intercollegiate Tennis Association rankings, said she was considering coming overseas to play college tennis when Thornqvist invited her to UNC.

"If I would have went to school at

home, I would have had to stop playing tennis," said Pinchbeck, because there's

no college tennis in her home country. So she visited and fell in love with UNC and the closeness of the team.

"These are my best friends," Pinchbeck said of her teammates. "That's what makes coming out here so much fun."

Pinchbeck said her doubles partner, sophomore Kendrick Bunn, is one of her closest friends. They have a record of 19-10 at the No. 1 spot. Last year was not so glorious for

Pinchbeck, though.

After toiling through her first semester with constant fatigue, Pinchbeck went home over winter break. She was diagnosed with Graves' disease, a thyroid condition that Pinchbeck said was the source of her fatigue and elevated heart rate.

"I was so far away from home, and I got homesick," Pinchbeck said. "When I got sick and had to leave my family, it was just a rough time, and it just made

Pinchbeck returned to UNC in the spring and finished the season 16-11 at No. 6 seed singles, although she admits she shouldn't have been playing. Her doctors had told her that her condition was serious enough to bring on a heart attack.

But Pinchbeck refused to quit. With medication controlling her condition, Pinchbeck increased her training sessions during the summer and continues to work out independently of the team.

"I am so proud of the way Kate has been able to overcome adversity from last year," UNC assistant coach Alisha Woodroof said. "She's just one of the hardest workers I know.

That hard work has paid off for Pinchbeck, who boasts a 28-7 singles record. Four of Pinchbeck's last seven

matches have been three-set matches.

"Kate is one of the most fierce competitors I have ever coached," Woodroof said. "She has tremendous heart. You always want someone like that on your team: someone who always gives every-

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STA TRAVEL



North Carolina sophomore Kate Pinchbeck has gone to three sets in four of her last seven singles matches. She is 28-7 on the season.

thing they've got for every point."

Pinchbeck said the struggle to make
a comeback has made her college

career all the more satisfying.
Pinchbeck said, "Last year I couldn't

win at No. 6 and now winning at No. 2 and No. 3 singles and playing No. 1 doubles makes all the adversity of last

CAT'S CRADLE

year and all the hard work I put in so much better.'

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

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Tigers, Earns No. 2 Seed

CLEMSON, S.C. - North Carolina senior Chad Riley outlasted Kevin Gottfried 6-4, 4-6, 7-6 (7-3) to clinch North Carolina's 5-2 victory at Clemson on Sunday. The win clinched the Tar Heels the No. 2 seed in this weekend's ACC tournament in Orlando, Fla.

Clemson won the doubles point with victories at the No. 1 and 3 positions. The Tar Heels posted straight-set victories at the middle three positions in the singles lineup to take a 3-1 lead.

But Clemson freshman Lee Taylor Walker rallied from a 5-2 deficit in the

first set to defeat Greg Archer 7-6, 6-3. With the score 3-2, UNC's Marcio Petrone won a tiebreak against the Tigers' Josh Goffi to split sets at No. 1 seed singles. As Petrone and Goffi head-ed for a third set, Chad Riley and Kevin Gottfried remained on serve in the third set at sixth-seeded singles.

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Riley, the reigning ACC champion at No. 6, won a third-set tiebreak 7-3 to secure the Tar Heels' match-clinching fourth point.



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